



Middle Tennessee State University

Board of Trustees

Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 4, 2024
1:30 p.m.

MEC Meeting Room – 2nd Floor
Miller Education Center
503 East Bell Street
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37130



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Quarterly Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 4, 2024
1:30 p.m.

AGENDA

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Introduction of Student-Veteran

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Roll Call

Minutes.....Tab 1
September 10, 2024 Fall Board Meeting

**Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee Report
and Recommendations**Tab 2

- 1) Approval of Tenure
- 2) Approval of New Academic Programs
 - a. Master of Science (M.S.) in Biomedical Sciences
 - b. Master of Science (M.S.) in Digital Media
 - c. Master of Science (M.S.) in Legal Studies
- 3) Approval of New Policy – 51 Institutional Accreditation

Audit and Compliance Committee Meeting Report

Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting Report and RecommendationsTab 3

- 1) Approval of Compensation
- 2) Approval of 2024-25 October Revised Budget
- 3) Approval of Sale of Property

President’s Report

Closing Remarks

Adjournment



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

SUBJECT: **Minutes of September 10, 2024
Fall Quarterly Board Meeting**

PRESENTER: Chairman Steve Smith

Background Information

Approval of minutes of September 10, 2024 Fall Quarterly Board Meeting

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on September 10, 2024, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Board Chair Steve Smith called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of Student Veteran

General Huber introduced Ian Hedrick, an Army Veteran. Mr. Hedrick started college at MTSU but left to serve in the Army Special Forces for five (5) years. After his tour of commitment, he decided that he needed to care for his fifteen (15) year-old sister and his mother, who had been stricken with Lyme. Shortly afterward, he resumed his studies at MTSU and earned his BS in international relations. Mr. Hedrick is married and has two (2) children, a three (3) year-old daughter and a six-day-old son. Presently at MTSU, he is improving his language capabilities in Russian and Italian, and studying drones. He has been accepted into the Johns Hopkins graduate program for Advanced International Studies in Italy. Mr. Hedrick expressed his appreciation for MTSU. He described his journey as a student who labored academically during his initial enrollment to now being accepted into Johns Hopkins. He also shared his experiences struggling with life and how this was unfortunately typical for many of his fellow veterans. Lastly, Mr. Hedrick disclosed how General Huber and staff at the Daniels Center have gone above and beyond to assist him.

Roll Call

Board Secretary James Floyd called the roll. The following trustees were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, Pete DeLay, Bill Jones, Mary Martin, Shaylaine Roker, Steve Smith, Chris Karbowski Vanek, Michael Wade, and Pam Wright. A quorum was declared.

President Sidney A. McPhee; Mark Byrnes, University Provost; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Yvette Clark, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Khalilah Doss, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive; James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary; and Kim Edgar, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, were also in attendance.

Approval of June 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes – Action

The first agenda item was approval of the June 11, 2024 meeting minutes. Trustee Vanak made the motion to approve the minutes, and Trustee Boyd seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Committee Report: The Audit and Compliance Committee

Committee Chair Boyd reported that the Audit and Compliance Committee met on August 20, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its May 21, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained two (2) action items, unanimously approved by the Committee, to be considered and voted on by the Board. Several information items were also presented.

Materials outlining these actions were made available for review before the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Annual Report for Audit and Consulting Services – Action

TCA 49-14-102, the MTSU Board of Trustees Bylaws, and Policy on Board Committees require that an annual comprehensive report on the internal audit function be submitted for the Committee's review. The Annual Report for Audit and Consulting Services was submitted and reviewed. In addition, Policy 70 Internal Audit requires the Audit and Compliance Committee's approval of the audit plan. Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive, presented the Internal Audit Plan for Fiscal Year 2025. The Committee unanimously approved the annual plan as presented.

Risk Assessment Reporting – Action

T.C.A. § 9-18-104 of the Financial Integrity Act requires higher education institutions to prepare and provide a management assessment of risk to the State of Tennessee's Commissioner of Finance and Administration and the Comptroller of the Treasury by December 31 annually. For 2024, Business and Finance along with Academic Affairs performed and provided risk assessment reporting.

In addition, a risk assessment report detailing university-wide risk and control activities was completed. The risk assessment documents are designated as confidential and are discussed in the Committee's non-public executive session. Drew Harpool, Associate Vice President for Business and Finance, presented the risk assessment reports to the Committee for approval prior to the reports' submission to the State, as required by law.

Motion

Trustee Boyd made the motion to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Boyd seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action items was carried unanimously.

Committee Report: Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee

Committee Chair Wright reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on August 20, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from the May 21, 2024, meeting. Informational items included an overview of the Division of Student Affairs, a report on Fall 2024 enrollment, and an Athletics update.

Finance and Personnel Committee

Trustee Jones reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on August 20, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its May 21, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained one (1) action item, unanimously approved by the Committee, to be considered and voted on by the Board. The committee report also contained four (4) information items. First, Bill Waits, Vice President for Campus Planning, presented a Capital Projects Status Update. Second, Lisa Batey, Interim Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, presented the Classified Employee Grievance Annual Report, which showed that the University had zero grievances for the 2023-24 year. Third, Ms. Batey also presented an update on the Incentive Pay Plan. Fourth, Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement, provided a philanthropy update. At the conclusion of Mr. Bales's presentation, Chairman Smith inquired about getting information on how other states match gifts and investments to explore possible legislative initiatives. Materials outlining this information were made available for review before the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Capital Disclosures - Action

This item involves a request to disclose the MTSU Road and Safety Improvements project. This project aims to enhance traffic flow and safety at the northern perimeter of campus, specifically along Middle Tennessee Boulevard and Greenland Drive. The proposed scope of work includes a pedestrian bridge over Middle Tennessee Boulevard, improved lighting and signaling, and

upgraded crosswalks. This project will utilize \$2.5 million in FY 2024 U.S. Department of Transportation Community Project funding.

Motion

Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the action item recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Wright seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item was carried unanimously.

Report from the President

Dr. McPhee expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to update the Board on matters and activities at the University.

Horse Science Center

Dr. McPhee reminded the Board that he periodically has asked various divisions of the University to come before the Board to bring attention to some of the excellence that occurs on campus. For this meeting, he highlighted through the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, our equestrian team and stock horse team, which have done an outstanding job in winning national championships, and the academic performance of the Horse Science Center. Dr. McPhee introduced Dr. Greg Van Patten, Dean of Basic and Applied Sciences, for him to brief the Board on the horse science center and the equestrian team.

Dr. Van Patten expressed how these teams are a source of pride for the college and School of Agriculture. He introduced the two coaches for the respective teams, Ariel Higgins, Director - Equestrian Programs, and Andrea Rego, Lecturer. Ms. Higgins then presented the equestrian team members and outlined their team and individual accomplishments. She also described the seven (7) levels of their competition format. Ms. Higgins stated that the wonderful thing about the MTSU equestrian team is that it mirrors so much of what we look for in our horse science students. The team accepts students of all levels, members who come in with a lifetime of horse experience already, and those who just have a deep interest and passion. Similarly, the

department not only has people who go on to ride successfully and professionally beyond the University but also has those persons who contribute to the industry in other ways. Ms. Rego next spoke about the stock horse team and our Center of Equine Recovery for Veterans (CERV). She highlighted the team's participation in the National Championship Show in Amarillo, Texas, this past spring, where they were a top-six Division Two team competing against eighteen (18) other teams. Ms. Rego presented the team members and noted their accomplishments. She also shared that CERV is a partnership between the Veterans Recovery Center (VRC) in Murfreesboro and MTSU Horse Science, which she presently coordinates. IN CERV, veterans come to the MTSU Horse Science Center and work with students in her equine assisted therapy class. The class helps anywhere from six (6) to eight (8) veterans per semester. We have helped over one hundred fifty (150) veterans since the program's inception. Lastly, student Simone Allen spoke about MTSU's third horse team, the horse judging team, and the championships they compete in.

2024 Fall Recruitment and Enrollment

Dr. McPhee informed the Board that our official census enrollment information shows a total enrollment of 20,540 registered students for the 2024 Fall. This represents an increase of 342 students, or 1.69% more than last year. Dr. McPhee emphasized that this is a remarkable achievement. He mentioned that all universities in the state were facing challenges with regard to the FAFSA and, in fact, MTSU has the largest number of Pell-eligible and first-generation college students among the major universities. He stressed that with our students and their families being dependent on financial aid from the federal government, we were concerned that there could be a significant decline in enrollment. He further emphasized that our enrollment increase did not just happen by accident. Rather, there was a tremendous amount of work by our recruiters, our admissions office under the leadership of Dr. Laurie Witherow, our faculty, and staff. Our enrollment numbers include the following: new freshmen are up by 1.06%; new transfers are up 2.8%; and total graduate enrollment is 2448 students, just 67 students shy of last year.

On the recruitment front, Dr. McPhee stated that True Blue Tours begin tomorrow. Stops will include counselor lunches and receptions for prospective students and parents in thirteen (13) different locations. Dr. McPhee again thanked the admissions staff and the faculty, who continue working hard to keep our enrollment headed in a positive direction.

The Princeton Review and the Wall Street Journal

Dr. McPhee stated that one of the four major goals that the Board of Trustees identified this past year included the University being recognized by national rankings. He was pleased to report that MTSU was named in the Princeton Review's list of best colleges and universities for the sixth straight year. The Princeton Review publishes college rankings based on surveys of students from 390 higher education institutions and covers a variety of topics, from academics to campus life. In addition, the Princeton Review awarded MTSU's Student Government Association a spot in its Top 25. The Princeton Review looks at how strongly students feel about engagement, involvement, the quality of life on campus, and extracurricular activities. MTSU is the only Tennessee higher education institution to place on this list, which only ranks 25 in total, making the list more exclusive. Dr. McPhee recognized Michai Mosby, SGA President, for the wonderful job he is doing. Dr. McPhee was also excited to announce that the Wall Street Journal has recognized MTSU as one of America's Best Colleges 2025. He explained that there are about 5300 private and public universities in the United States. And for the first time, MTSU has been put on this list as one of the top universities in the country.

Hotel Development Project

Dr. McPhee advised that on Tuesday, September 3, MTSU issued the intent to award notice to select Sila Developments as the best evaluated proposer for the MTSU Public-Private hotel development project. Based in Nashville, Sila brings experience in hospitality development to Middle Tennessee, and its leadership team includes two MTSU graduates who are excited about the future partnership with MTSU that will provide not only convenient lodging but also

experiential learning opportunities for MTSU students in various academic programs including the MTSU Tourism and Hospitality program. The hotel development concept includes a four-story, 122-key hotel developed on the existing Middle Tennessee parking lot at the southwest corner of Middle Tennessee Boulevard and Greenland Drive. In the following months, MTSU staff will enter into final negotiations with Sila, finalize legal agreements, and proceed with the development. The hotel brand will be finalized after design, and Sila told Dr. McPhee that a number of major hotel brands have inquired about this project.

Conclusion

Dr. McPhee thanked the Board of Trustees for allowing him to present his report and for its continued support.

Closing Remarks from Chairman Smith

Chairman Smith commended the efforts that have been extended on the hotel project. He also shared that on October 10, 2024, General Jim Mattis will be the featured speaker at a breakfast fundraiser benefitting the Daniels Center at the Hutton Hotel in Nashville. He encouraged everyone to support and attend the event. As of today, the Daniels Center has \$375,000 in commitments and \$250,000 in the bank, including checks from the president of our university and the athletic director. At the event, Senator Bill Frist is scheduled to interview General Mattis and Chairman Smith anticipates a lively conversation on world events.

Adjournment

Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 1:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

SUBJECT: **Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee**

DATE: December 4, 2024

PRESENTER: Pam Wright
Committee Chair

-
- Approval of Tenure
 - Approval of New Academic Programs
 - Master of Science (M.S.) in Biomedical Sciences
 - Master of Science (M.S.) in Digital Media
 - Master of Science (M.S.) in Legal Studies
 - Approval of New Policy – 51 Institutional Accreditation



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **Approval of Tenure**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The University occasionally finds it necessary to recommend tenure and/or promotion outside the typical review calendar. The following faculty members have been reviewed by their department and college committees, department chairs, and the college deans, according to MTSU Policies 204 (Tenure) and 205 (Promotion) and their respective college and department policies.

The President and Provost recommend that tenure be granted to Prof. Mary Ann Jones, effective December 4, 2024, and that tenure and promotion to associate professor be granted to Prof. Lu Xiong, retroactive to August 1, 2024.



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **Approval of New Academic Program
M.S. in Biomedical Sciences**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The **M.S. in Biomedical Sciences** in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences is 30 credit hours and fully on-ground. Initially approved by the MTSU Board of Trustees in April 2019, the degree will support regional workforce development in areas of healthcare, including clinical research and trials, biomedical and biotechnology research, and forensic science testing. The degree can also be utilized by students who need more time to prepare for professional school. The proposal is scheduled to be on THEC's Winter agenda.

A New Academic Program Proposal is attached for review and approval.



NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL (NAPP)

M.S. in Biomedical Sciences

Table of Contents	
<i>Section</i>	<i>Page Number(s)</i>
Revised Letter of Notification (with Feasibility Study as Appendix)	2-24
LON Evaluation from THEC Staff	25-34
Provost Mark Byrnes' response to the LON Evaluation	35
Revised New Academic Program Proposal	36-53
NAPP Evaluation from THEC Staff	54-66
External Review from John Bailey	67-73
Provost Mark Byrnes' response to NAPP Evaluation & External Review	74-76
Appendix A: Letters of Support	77-82
Aegis Sciences	77
Life Sciences TN	78
Physician Assistant Program (MTSU)	79
Quillen College of Medicine (ETSU)	80
Vanderbilt School of Medicine	81
Volunteer Botanicals	82
Appendix B: Updated THEC Financial Projections Form	83
Appendix C: Faculty CVs	84-138
Appendix D: Course Syllabi	139-280

Office of the President

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January 11, 2024

Steven Gentile, PhD
Executive Director
TN Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa L. Parks Ave, 9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Gentile:

In accordance with Tennessee Higher Education Commission Policy A 1.0, Section 1.0.5A, this letter signifies my support for the development of the **M.S. in Biomedical Sciences** at Middle Tennessee State University. MTSU's Board of Trustees has already approved the program as a "Degree Under Consideration."

The Board and I believe that the addition of the 30-credit hour, nonthesis degree program will enhance MTSU's portfolio and will strengthen the University's contribution to healthcare-related workforce demands of the Middle Tennessee region and beyond. The program, which is designed to be completed in less than a calendar year, will be housed in MTSU's College of Basic and Applied Science.

We appreciate THEC staff's consideration of this Letter of Notification and look forward to continued collaboration with your office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sidney A. McPhee".

Sidney A. McPhee
President

CC: Dr. Julie Roberts, THEC Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Mark Byrnes, MTSU Provost

VI. Overview

Institution Name

Middle Tennessee State University

Proposed Academic Program

Biomedical Sciences

Degree Designation

Master of Science (M.S.)

Proposed CIP Code

26.0102 – Biomedical Sciences, General

Definition: A general program that focuses on the integrative scientific study of biological issues related to health and medicine, or a program in one or more of the biomedical sciences that is undifferentiated as to title. Includes instruction in any of the basic medical sciences at the research level; biological science research in biomedical faculties; and general studies encompassing a variety of the biomedical disciplines.

Academic Program Liaison (APL) name and contact information

Amy Aldridge Sanford, PhD
Vice Provost for Academic Programs
Middle Tennessee State University
Cope Administration Building, Office 111
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
Office: 615-494-7611
Email: amy.aldrige.sanford@mtsu.edu

Implementation Date

Proposed implementation date (semester and year) when students will enroll in the proposed academic program

May 2025

II. Background

Background Concerning Academic Program Development

There has been a continued increase in demand for qualified individuals in the healthcare workforce that current supply has not satisfied. At the same time, competition in recent years has continued to increase for admission to medical schools, dental schools, and programs for other health professions such as physician assistant and pharmacist. It is now common for students to fail to gain admission on their first application to these professional schools and programs, but they can gain admission if they can improve the competitiveness of their application on a second submission. This has given rise to the common idea of a “gap year” spent improving aspects of their application. It has become evident that many MTSU students, particularly those that are first generation, naturalized immigrant, or permanent resident students, need further coursework due to difficult starts in college, language barriers, or the issues of balancing work and the demands of tough science coursework as they fulfilled pre-requisites for these programs.

Nationwide, second or even third applications are normal for these academic “late bloomers.” Students such as these typically enter post-baccalaureate Master of Science programs to increase the confidence of admissions committees in their academic preparedness for health professional schools and programs. These are also the same groups of students that are highly likely to return to areas near where they earned undergraduate and post-baccalaureate degrees to practice, often committing to work in medically underserved communities. The tremendous need for healthcare workers in the numerous underserved areas of Tennessee makes such a program beneficial to the state as a valuable investment in the growth of the healthcare workforce. The availability of these programs is growing; however, currently in Tennessee all the programs providing the same focus are offered by private schools and are often deemed unaffordable by students at public universities like MTSU. It is important to note there are similarly named programs at two public institutions in the state, but the career focus is primarily research-related, which is different from the primary focus of this proposed program. The need for a public-supported post-baccalaureate M.S. program in the State of Tennessee to aid the movement of qualified students into professional schools, and thus the healthcare workforce, is evident. The demand for these programs is rising. This creates a unique opportunity for the program. MTSU’s central location and proven track record in pre-health professional preparation for diverse, first generation, veteran, and immigrant students make MTSU a good fit for a public, post-baccalaureate M.S. program focused on pre-health professional students.

This program can also contribute directly to workforce development in many of the supporting areas of healthcare, which also are facing increased demand for employees due to growth of the overall healthcare industry. This would include pharmaceutical research and sales, clinical research and clinical trial coordinators, biomedical and biotechnology research, and forensic science testing among other jobs and careers. Numerous diagnostic positions are required to support modern healthcare, and these workers are also in demand. Although this type of lab work is more typically filled by those in standard, thesis-based research M.S. degree programs, the proposed program can also serve this need by focusing electives on lab and technique-based courses, of which many are available. It will enable students to graduate more quickly and still be competitive for the same types of positions. Both the Chemistry and Biology Departments

receive numerous requests for applicants to these types of positions every year, in addition to the many that are normally advertised. As a result, the proposed program has both direct workforce development, as well as the indirect workforce development of helping students gain admission to pre-health professional programs.

Purpose and Nature of Academic Program

This program would be the only public option in the state of Tennessee for a nonthesis M.S. degree in Biomedical Sciences aimed to prepare students either for professional school or direct entry into the workforce. This program should help pre-professional students increase their competitiveness for medical, dental, or pharmaceutical schools, or physician assistant programs. It may even be helpful for those vying for positions in veterinary colleges or physical therapy programs. It is also very appropriate training for those interested in clinical trial research, becoming a clinical research coordinator, or entering pharmaceutical sales. With appropriate selection of lab-based electives in either their undergraduate or graduate program, these M.S. graduates would be well-suited for the growing number of healthcare and biotechnology support jobs, including as lab technicians, medical diagnostics, and even pharmaceutical development, testing, and sales. Although other degree programs can lead to employment in these areas, the proposed program at MTSU would be shorter (10 months), avoid the uncertainty of a research and thesis-based program, and be focused solely on science, without the business courses found in a Professional Science Master’s program. All of this would make it an attractive option for certain student populations that would help to quickly move them into the workforce.

This degree will provide a high quality, course-heavy, non-thesis program of study designed for completion in 10 months. The 30-credit hour curriculum will consist of a 16-credit hour core of foundational courses (physiology, biochemistry, and cell and molecular biology) with opportunities for electives based on the individual student’s career plan. The program will be offered in a traditional, face-to-face format in order to maximize one-on-one advising and interactions, since it is anticipated that each student will have their own unique needs and goals. Initially, one new seminar course will need to be created and implemented. Other course offerings may need to increase to accommodate a larger student population.

Degree Component	Hours
Program Core	16
Electives	14
	30

Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission

The Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education 2015-2025¹ is a road map for the enhancement of higher education within the state over the next decade with the primary goals of “increasing the educational attainment level of Tennesseans, while also addressing the state’s economic development, workforce development and research needs.” If approved, the M.S. in Biomedical Sciences will align with the goals of the State Master Plan and associated components of its organizing framework in the following ways.

- *“acknowledge[ing] the critical need for academic programs of distinction at the graduate and professional level to fully address Tennessee’s economic development, workforce, and research needs”*

The population of Tennessee is expected to grow by ~12% between 2015 and 2025.² This growth will be accompanied by a concomitant and proportional increase in the need for healthcare services of all types. This need will be particularly pressing in Middle Tennessee and the greater Nashville area, where counties are projected to grow at an even faster rate (e.g., ~25% increase in Rutherford County). In preparation for this, the Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency has authorized expansion of area hospitals, including a \$47 million enlargement of Saint Thomas Rutherford in Murfreesboro³, increasing the capacity of the hospital from 286 to 358 beds. A further expansion to a total of 416 beds is underway and slated for completion by 2024.⁴ Additionally, Vanderbilt and Ascension St. Thomas are planning for a new 42 bed hospital in Rutherford County, likely opening in late 2025.⁵ Beyond basic facilities, a similar push will also be required to train and recruit healthcare professionals and associated support personnel in the area. The Biomedical Sciences M.S. program will help to address this need by preparing Tennessee graduates for acceptance into medical, dental, pharmacy, and other professional schools as well as preparing diagnostic and pharmaceutical support personnel. Many of these students will seek employment in the region after completing their programs. Graduates of the M.S. program that elect not to continue to a professional program will have developed a background in biochemistry, cell and molecular biology, and related disciplines, which would make them suitable candidates for biomedical research Ph.D. programs or employment in private sector career paths such as those available in pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical diagnostics areas.

- *“minimized redundancy in degree offerings” and by “recognize[ing . . .] historically underserved (adults, low income, academically underprepared, nonwhite) student populations worthy of focused policy and programmatic attention throughout the coming decade”*

There are a small number of existing post-baccalaureate premedical programs at private institutions (e.g., Lincoln Memorial University and Meharry Medical College) in Tennessee; however, these can be prohibitively expensive for low-income students, and there are currently no public universities in Middle Tennessee offering an equivalent program. Of the current student body at MTSU, 36% are underrepresented minorities, and 95% of students receive financial aid.⁶ MTSU also has the largest Adult Degree Completion Program of its kind in the state to assist armed service veterans and adults.⁷ Other public universities such as Tennessee State University, Austin Peay University, and Tennessee Technological University have similarly large percentages of underrepresented and low-income students. For these reasons, the Biomedical Sciences M.S., the first of its kind in the area, would be ideally positioned to meet the needs of historically underserved student populations.

The proposed M.S. in Biomedical Sciences will also help MTSU work towards the first and arguably most important goal of its Academic Master Plan⁸, the advancement of *“academic quality through excellence in teaching.”* A pathway to achieving the goals of

the MTSU academic master plan is outlined in three strategic directions. As part of Strategic Directions 2 and 3, MTSU has committed to

- “[D]evelop innovative, interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programs” and “[E]ncourage and support innovative programs.”

By its very nature, the M.S. in Biomedical Sciences will be interdisciplinary and will be operated by MTSU Biology and Chemistry faculty with courses covering cell and molecular biology, cell metabolism, physiology, and biochemistry. The continuing success of the MTSU Molecular Biosciences Ph.D. program provides precedent that interdepartmental interdisciplinary programs can be developed and sustained at MTSU.

Institutional Capacity to Deliver the Proposed Academic Program

This program will consist primarily of existing courses within the College of Basic and Applied Sciences; therefore, it will not require significant additional resources. Rather, it will have a positive impact on graduate enrollments in these existing courses and allow them to be offered more frequently, benefiting students in other programs. With more than 75 full-time faculty in the departments of Biology and Chemistry and existing bachelor’s, master’s, and Ph.D. programs, the College has the necessary resources to successfully deliver this degree. This program is unlikely to negatively impact enrollments in existing thesis-based, research-oriented M.S. programs in biology or chemistry as it has a distinctly different focus and will attract a different type of student. The purpose and intensity of the proposed program is also quite different from the two-year M.S.P.S. programs offered by the College of Basic & Applied Sciences, which contain a significant number of business courses as a core requirement.

Existing Programs Offered at Public and Private Tennessee Institutions

In terms of degrees with similar names and/or CIP codes, there are only two at public institutions in Tennessee. ETSU has a Biomedical concentration within their MS in Biology. It is a thesis-based program designed to prepare students for research in the Biomedical area or for doctoral work. The publicly available data does not separate degrees by concentration, so the data from the last three years are for all concentrations of the MS in Biology. UTHSC also offers an M.S. in Biomedical Science with a concentration in laboratory research and management. Again, it is a two-year program that is designed specifically to prepare students only for future employment in research, clinical labs, or lab management.

All other programs are at private institutions. Meharry Medical College has a similar M.S. in Health Sciences, which is designed for a similar purpose and is one year in length. It has seen considerable growth since its creation in 2010. Lincoln Memorial offers three related programs, with the Anatomical Sciences concentration being a similar non-thesis degree program. Lipscomb University has a multi-track MS in Biomedical Sciences, that has seen steady enrollment. Union University had a very small MS in Biology program in which one track is non-thesis based, but that was discontinued in 2001. Finally, Vanderbilt has a new (fall 2018) MS in Biomedical Sciences program that is an 18-24-month program geared more toward

research.

CIP Code	Institution	Program	Most recent year	Prior year	Prior year
26.0101	East Tennessee State University ⁹	MS in Biology ^a	17	12	11
26.0101	University of Tennessee Health Science Center ¹⁰	MS in Biomedical Science ^b	3	7	1
51.000	Meharry Medical College ¹¹	MS in Health Sciences ^c	122	86	46
26.999 26.0403 01.8101	Lincoln Memorial University ¹²	MS in Biomedical Sciences, Anatomical Sciences, and Veterinary Biomedical Sciences ^d	60	97	85
26.0204	Lipscomb University ¹³	MS in Biomolecular Sciences ^e	33	33	24
Not active	Union University ¹⁴	MS in Biology ^f	0		
26.0101	Vanderbilt University ¹⁵	MS in Biomedical Sciences ^g	42	38	33

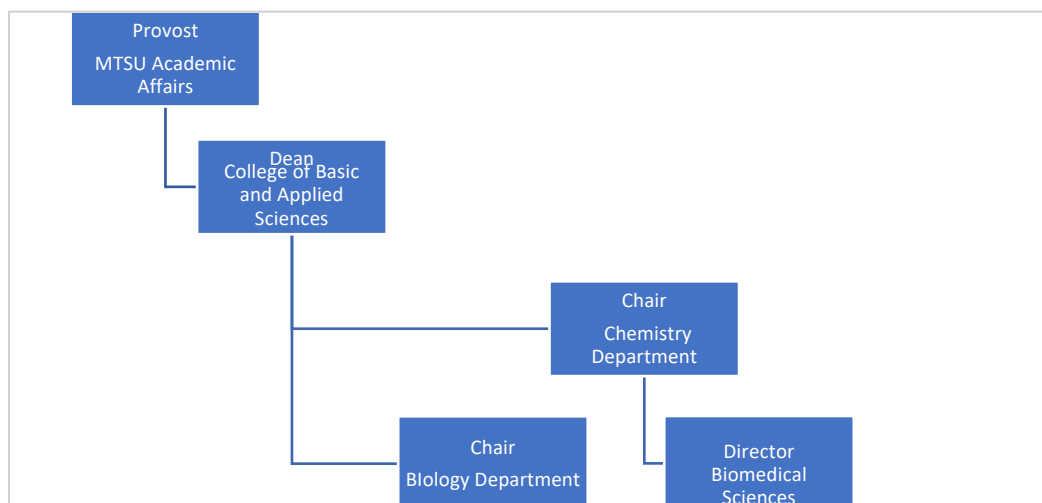
a.Data for all concentrations, with most recent year being 2018-2017. B. Data for all concentrations with the most recent year being 2022/2021. C. Most recent year 2021. D. Data for all three related degrees with the most recent year being 2021-2022. E. Data for three concentrations with the most recent year being 2022. F. Data for two concentrations, only one of which is non-thesis with data from 2019. G. Data for all five MS programs in the health area, only one of which is related to the proposed program with most recent data from 2022-2021.

Accreditation

The proposed program does not have a special accrediting body. The only notifications that will be required will be the standard reporting of new programs to SACSCOC.

Administrative Structure

The M.S. in Biomedical Science will be an interdisciplinary program including faculty from the Departments of Biology and Chemistry in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences. Faculty will remain part of their home departments while teaching courses in this program. There will be a program director and an administrative assistant/advisor, with the program director reporting to the chair of the Department of Chemistry, since this department houses the undergraduate pre-health programs and advising.



III. Feasibility Study

Student Interest

Interest and potential demand for this program is healthy and was examined from four perspectives: surveys of current MTSU students; national trends and state interest; local and regional need/demand; and potential “feeder” institutions.

MTSU Survey: A survey of current students in upper division biology and chemistry courses was taken in spring of 2022 to explore the level of interest in this program. To summarize, 339 students were surveyed. 266 of those students plan to go to a health professional school. Of those students, 59% said that they were very or somewhat likely to “enroll in a one-year, non-thesis master’s degree program at MTSU that is specifically designed to increase your qualifications for professional school.” Even if only the “very likely” students were to enroll, that would be 71 students. This number does not include all students at MTSU and does not include any students from other regional schools. These preliminary survey results indicate that this program has the potential for high enrollment.

National Trends and State Interest: M.S. degree trends and interest comes from two sources. First, data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) at the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education indicated a doubling of M.S. programs in Biomedical Sciences in the U.S. between 2011 and 2018. Additionally, the number of Biomedical Sciences M.S. degrees awarded more than tripled during this same period. At the program level, there was also a significant increase in the number of degrees awarded per program, which increased from approximately 20 to 30 per year during the same timeframe.¹⁶ Second, there are clear trends of increasing applications to medical schools from Tennessee residents accompanied by a steady rate of applications from Tennessee residents to dental schools, as indicated by applicant data from the American Association of Medical Colleges and the American Dental Education Association.¹⁷

Local and Regional Demand

At the state level, reports have noted the importance of the healthcare workforce. Occupational projections through 2028 indicate there will be over 30,000 healthcare practitioner and technical opportunities in Tennessee.¹⁸ There are several other sources that support this type of growth in Tennessee and specifically the middle region of the state. Currently, according to the Nashville Health Sector Research Report¹⁹, Nashville is home to more than 500 health care companies; data indicate that “121,027 persons employed in the Nashville MSA” (p. 15) are in direct healthcare services. Another number to support local demand in the report is the expected increase in employment opportunities of 67,000 resulting from new jobs, retirements, etc. from 2018-2023.

Additionally, the 2018 report by the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development²⁰ makes it clear that ambulatory healthcare services (outpatient healthcare) and hospitals are key industries in the state and specifically in Middle Tennessee. Both ambulatory healthcare services and hospitals are included in the top 5 industries in the state, with the healthcare and social assistance industry employment growing 8% between 2013 to 2018.

Hospitals were included in the list of industries growing in number of establishments with a 16.1% growth rate in 2018. Ambulatory healthcare services and hospitals are listed as employing 154,069 and 146,409 in the state, respectively; this is an increase of 1.3% over 2017. Both ambulatory healthcare services and hospitals are also listed in the top 10 industries in all local workforce development areas of Middle Tennessee accounting for a total of 123,168 jobs broken into 62,408 employed in ambulatory healthcare services and 60,760 employed in hospitals.

In biomedical sciences, there is a clear need and demand within the state for individuals with master’s level training. The Tennessee Departments of Labor & Workforce Development’s report, “The Demand for STEM Occupations in Tennessee” lists medical scientists as an occupation expected to grow 22% within the state between 2016-2026, which, as previously noted, is greater than the 10% increase expected nationwide.²¹

Looking specifically at current employment opportunities, a series of searches using Indeed and CareerBuilder in March 2024 demonstrated very significant demand in numerous areas that can be served by the proposed degree. For example, a search for pharmacist (which winds up including pharmacy technicians) shows 211 openings within 100 miles of Murfreesboro on Indeed and 1,137 openings within 50 miles using CareerBuilder. For biomedical researcher, Indeed has 116 opening and CareerBuilder 27, which clinical testing shows 562 and 1,394 opportunities respectively. In areas that would be employment opportunities after a professional health program, there are also large number of jobs available: Physician Assistant 158/107, Physical therapy 173/1,043, dentist 121/238, physician 221/7,708 (this number is much larger on CareerBuilder because nursing is categorized with physician). As the growth rate of middle Tennessee shows no signs of lessening, these opportunities are expected to continue to be plentiful and available to graduates of the proposed program.

Collectively, these data indicate that healthcare and biomedical jobs are an important component of the regional and statewide economy. Growth in this area will likely continue for

the foreseeable future, increasing the need for appropriate health professional training in the region.

Employer Demand

The primary driver of this degree program is to prepare students to competitively enter health-related professional schools and subsequently impact the healthcare workforce, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. As noted in the Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report from THEC, healthcare is ranked as one of the six occupational groups in high demand.²² Additionally, there are opportunities for students with this graduate degree from MTSU in the broader and growing areas of biomedical research, healthcare diagnostics, and related fields. As previously noted, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development expects the need for medical scientists and workers in the healthcare industry to have a “bright future” with high projected rates of growth for associated careers.

As it relates to professional school opportunities, key workforce rates to consider are those for physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and even veterinarians. For all categories, the prospects for employment are strong as indicated in the MTSU BERC report (see Appendix A). Currently, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development data shows that each of these groups has a very low supply/demand ratio within the state, indicating few applicants for many jobs. These ratios range from 0.00 (2 candidates for 917 jobs) for physicians to 0.71 for pharmacists; dentists and veterinarians both have ratios of 0.13.²³

The Nashville metropolitan area, including Davidson, Rutherford, and Williamson counties, is the fastest growing metropolitan region in Tennessee with a growth rate of 15.56% for 2010-2018.²⁴ A corresponding growth in terms of healthcare needs and the need for more healthcare services and professionals would be expected and can actually already be seen by the expansion of Saint Thomas Rutherford hospital from 286 to 358 beds.³ Further expansion of Saint Thomas Rutherford and the addition of a Vanderbilt/Ascension hospital in the near future bear testimony to an accelerating trend.^{4,5} Another indicator of the need for healthcare professionals in the state is the fact that the majority of Tennessee is classified with whole or partial medically underserved populations or areas.²⁵ The demand for healthcare professionals, particularly physicians, across the state is great.

Demographics are also important in considering the future need for more physicians in Tennessee. The AAMC Tennessee Physician Workforce Profile shows that a third of practicing physicians in the state are over the age of 60.²⁶ While growth in the number of healthcare professionals is clearly dependent upon growth in capacity at the professional schools, that growth is also dependent upon the pool of highly qualified applicants. This last step is the one in which the proposed program can be of great benefit, particularly to the large population of first generation or non-traditional college students. These individuals frequently encounter challenges early in their college careers that effectively preclude them from successfully entering a healthcare professional school directly from their undergraduate degree, which can discourage them from continuing their chosen path without a clear, simple, affordable, and short option to be more competitive. A study from 2012 using AAMC data shows that successful medical school graduates that also graduated from post-baccalaureate pre-medical

programs are more demographically diverse and are more likely to consider practicing in underserved areas.²⁷ Additionally, the AAMC workforce report for 2019 indicates that 66.7% of the physicians practicing in Tennessee completed either undergraduate or graduate medical education in Tennessee.²⁸ Thus, a post-baccalaureate pre-medical program at a public university in Tennessee with a diverse population is likely to help fill the needs of medically underserved groups/areas in the state and retain more physicians in Tennessee for its growing population.

Recognition of the growth of the need for healthcare professionals can also be seen by the expanding number of such programs, with Belmont launching a new Medical program and Lincoln Memorial expanding its health-related professional programs. These programs will be seeking qualified applicants that can certainly be found in the graduates of the proposed program.

In addition to the enhanced need for health professionals in Tennessee, and Middle Tennessee in particular, the overall growth in the healthcare industry has boosted the demand for qualified individuals in additional jobs and careers. Many of these are currently filled by graduates from MTSU's B.S. programs in biology, biochemistry, and chemistry. Graduates of the M.S. in Biomedical Sciences program will be better qualified and more competitive for available positions in these areas. The M.S. degree will also raise the starting salary of successful individuals in these fields. Some of the more common positions where the degree can increase competitiveness of an applicant include pharmaceutical sales, clinical research or clinical trial coordination, medical testing, and forensic sciences and forensic science testing. As outlined in the previous section, there are hundreds of unfilled jobs in these areas within 50-100 miles of Murfreesboro, indicating a significant unmet need and significant opportunity for graduates of this program.

Career opportunities available upon completion of this degree include research in biomedical sciences in nearby centers of research like Vanderbilt University. Biotechnology companies also often engage in biomedical research. A recent search of common job sites ([glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com), [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), [ziprecruiter.com](https://www.ziprecruiter.com)) supports the report on STEM careers from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development by highlighting numerous opportunities in suitable positions for these graduates. The salary ranges for these careers are broad, but many of the careers, such as clinical trial coordinator or pharmaceutical sales representative, have annual salaries in the \$50,000 to \$123,000 range (www.salary.com; [careerexplorer.com](https://www.careerexplorer.com)).

Community and Industry Partnerships

This proposed M.S. in Biomedical Sciences has document support from health professional programs, but also from area healthcare related businesses. Letters from the Quillen College of Medicine at ETSU and the Physician Assistant Program at MTSU, as well as the Vanderbilt School of Medicine, Aegis Sciences, Volunteer Botanicals, and Life Sciences TN can be found in Appendix B.

IV. Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Projected attrition is based on the 80-90% graduation rates observed in the M.S. programs in

Chemistry and Biology and the M.S. in Professional Science programs at MTSU.

Projected Enrollments and Graduates				
Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1	2025-2026	15 (11/4)	2	9
2	2026-2027	17 (11/6)	3	14
3	2027-2028	18 (12/6)	3	14
4	2028-2029	20 (13/7)	3	15
5	2029-2030	22 (14/8)	4	16

Note: For projected enrollment, the total of one-year and two-year students is listed first, with the numbers in parentheses being one-year/two-year students.

V. Projected Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

Faculty and Instructional Staff

Beginning in Year 1, support for up to four adjuncts to cover up to 32 workload units per year are being budgeted. The cost (\$800 per workload unit) is based upon the standard adjunct pay rate at MTSU. These adjuncts will be needed in the Chemistry and Biology Departments to cover introductory level courses so that existing faculty can teach more and/or larger sections of the graduate courses for this program. These adjuncts will also enable course release time for the coordinator to enable recruiting, advising, mentoring, and liaison activities with area colleges and health programs. Additionally, a summer stipend (\$5,000) for the program coordinator is budgeted based on the standard rate for graduate program coordinators at MTSU. The annual total is \$25,600.

The program will require an existing faculty member to assume responsibilities for the Graduate Program Director role to recruit new students, advise and meet with students, and organize the program throughout the academic year. Because the program is a two-year program that will require continuous recruitment, projections include three hours of course reassignment in the fall and spring semesters, and a stipend during the summer. The annual cost for the Graduate Program Director is equivalent to hiring an adjunct to teach two courses a semester at \$2,400 a course and up to \$5,000 for a summer stipend for the graduate director, for a total annual cost of \$14,600.

Non-Instructional Staff

Academic Affairs will cover one-half of an existing employee's compensation going forward. Her duties with that effort will be devoted to this program and to related activities with the undergraduate pre-professional program. If she has any balance of time, she will utilize it to do additional related work, including connecting UG STEM students with research opportunities in the College. The annual cost (including benefits) of her half-time effort to Academic Affairs will be around \$40,000 with a 3% cost of living increase budgeted annually. The cost share will begin in the planning year on 09/01/2024.

Graduate Assistants

No graduate assistants will be requested for this program.

Accreditation

There is no professional accrediting organization for this program and SACSCOC notification will be handled through the existing coordinator at MTSU, so no expense is anticipated.

Consultants

As part of the THEC approval process, the program will require an external reviewer in the planning year, with a one-time cost estimated at \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend and travel costs.

Equipment

No special equipment beyond that already existing at MTSU is required.

Information Technology

Existing information technology systems are perfectly adequate for this program.

Library Resources

No additional resources beyond those already supporting science and health related programs at MTSU are required.

Marketing

One-time and recurring marketing costs are included for design and printing of rack cards, design of a digital flyer, a tablecloth and pullup banner for career fairs, advisor handout cards, as well as postcard mailers. The initial cost is \$2,000, and the smaller annual amount of \$500 is for restocking of consumable items.

Facilities

Existing facilities in terms of office space, laboratories, and lecture space are adequate for this program.

Travel

Funds for either the coordinator and/or the staff position to visit area colleges for recruiting purposes are budgeted at \$2,000 annually.

Other

Miscellaneous expenses associated with operating a program, such as office supplies, and postage are included in this budget item valued at \$2,000 annually.

VI. Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program**Tuition**

Revenue for this program will come from tuition paid by the students enrolled in the program. For the purposes of these calculations, it is assumed that all students are in-state and are based on the 2022-2023 values for tuition and fees with no projected increases. It is assumed that there will be a mix of one-year (taking 15 credit hours per term) and two-year

students (taking 7-8 credit hours per term), with the majority opting for the faster completion allowed by the 10-month (two-term) option. This works out to an average of 25 credit hours (over two terms) per student. The cost for 12 credit hours in one semester is \$6,372 and the cost for 13 credit hours in the other semester is \$6,476, for a total student tuition and fee cost in one-year of \$12,848.

Grants

None anticipated.

Other

None anticipated.

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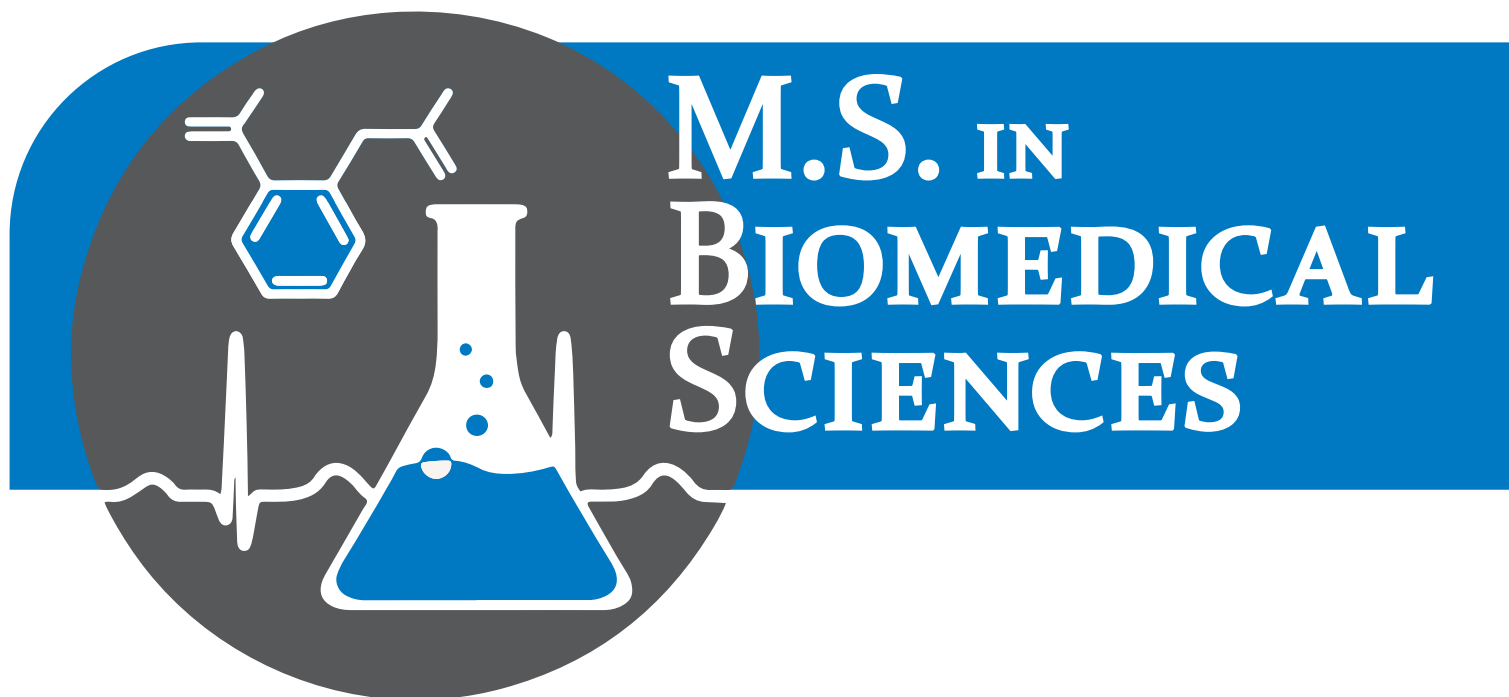
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FEASIBILITY STUDY



M.S. IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

March 2022

Steven G. Livingston, Ph.D.

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**

STATE UNIVERSITY.

JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Business and Economic Research Center

We evaluate the feasibility of a Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences program at MTSU. We look at student demand to enter such a program, and then at the employment prospects for those leaving with a degree.

A stated objective of the program is to assist students in strengthening their portfolios for acceptance into doctoral programs in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, and the like. We will thus focus upon this pathway. But we will also look at general interest in biomedical sciences programs and the job opportunities for degree holders who do not later attend a medical school.

Part I

Enrollment Trends and Student Interest

Figure 1 shows the steady growth nationally of biomedical master's programs over the past decade. Over that time, the number of programs has doubled and the number of degrees awarded has trebled. Student demand is robust. There are about 2.6 applicants for a master's in this field per accepted student. This has increased from 2.0 in the first part of the last decade.¹ Interest in this degree is clearly rising.

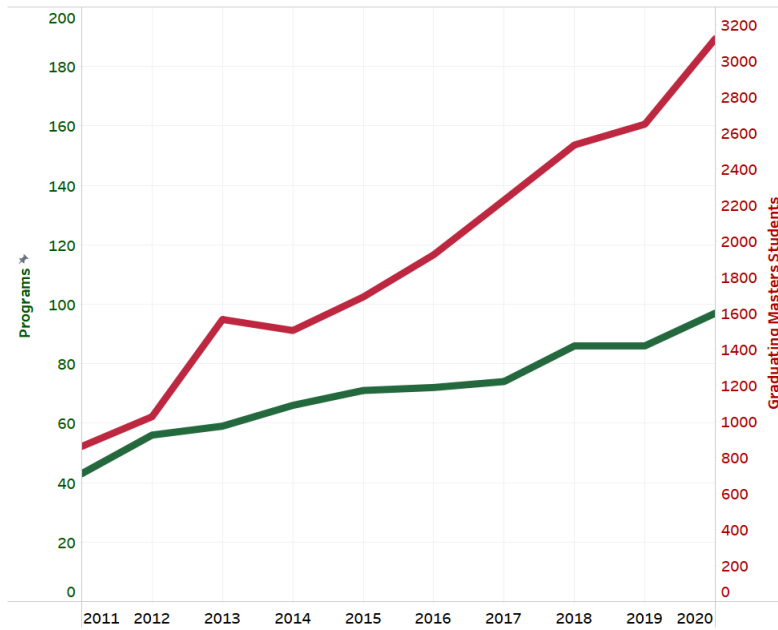
The number of degrees awarded per program shows a similar trend, as seen in Figure 2. In 2020, the modal program awarded thirty-two master's degrees. This indicates that on average these programs are fairly sizable and growing.

A targeted audience of the MTSU program is students wishing to enter medical doctorate programs. Figure 3 shows the number of state applicants to M.D., Dentistry, and Veterinary programs in recent years. We can see that the number applying to M.D. programs is rising slowly, while applications to dental programs is holding steady at around 200 Tennesseans per year. The Veterinary field does not publish exact counts of the geographic origins of applicants, but using the approximate data it does give, we estimate that the number of Tennesseans applying to veterinary school has risen from about 200 in 2010 to 326 in 2020.²

¹Calculated from IPEDS data. National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Data (<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>)

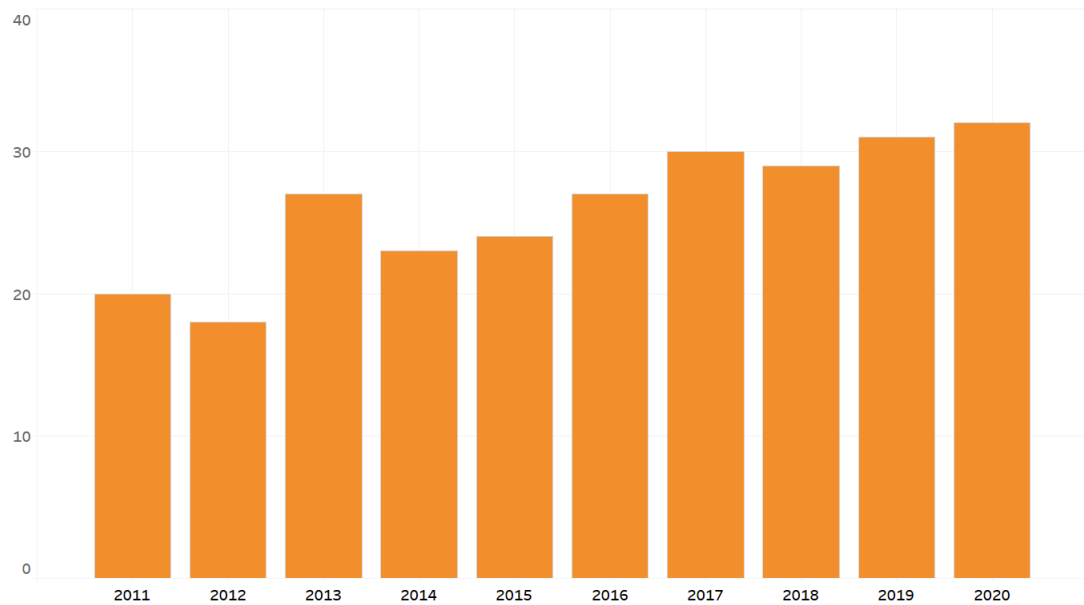
²The American Academy of Veterinary Medicine reports total number of national applicants and rough figures on geographic origins of acceptances. We thus calculate Tennessee applications from the two. https://www.aavmc.org/knowledge-center/?_resources_interest=veterinary-education year

Figure 1: Biomedical Master's Programs and Degrees Awarded



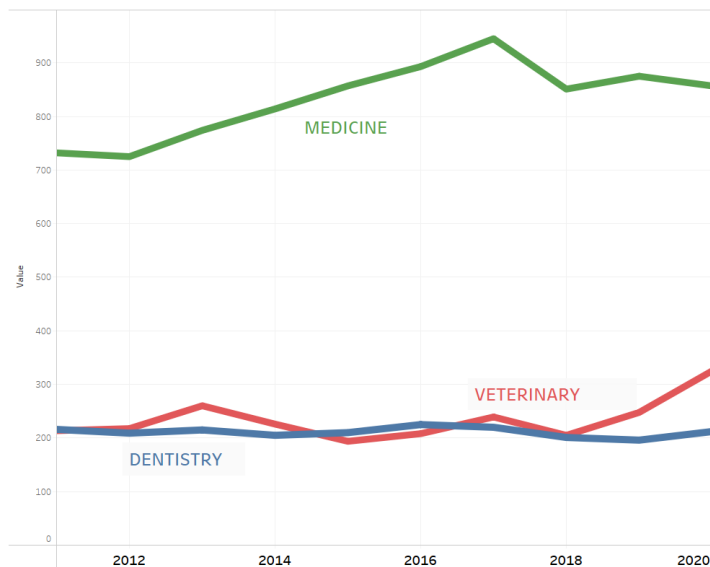
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Data (<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>).

Figure 2: Degrees Awarded per Program



Data from the National Center for Science and Education Statistics (<https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/ids/gss>)

Figure 3: Tennessee Applicants to Medical and Dentistry Doctorates



Sources: American Dental Education Association (<https://www.adea.org/data/students/>), the Association of American Medical Colleges (<https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/interactive-data/2019-facts-applicants-and-matriculants-data>), the American Academy of Veterinary Medicine ([https://www.aavmc.org/knowledge_center?_resources_interest=veterinary-education year](https://www.aavmc.org/knowledge_center?_resources_interest=veterinary-education%20year)).

Well over 1,000 individuals living in Tennessee apply to one of these three programs each year. There are, of course, other, smaller medical doctorates (ophthalmology, etc.) that would add to this total. Data trends show no reason to expect this to reverse.

Tennessee Biomedical/Preparatory Master’s Programs

Tennessee currently has but a few programs similar in purpose to that of the proposed MTSU program. Lipscomb University offers a Master’s in Biomolecular Science that it characterizes as a “premedical post-bac program.”³ It does not publish enrollments, but it averages awarding 25 degrees per year (since 2015).⁴ In 2018, Vanderbilt University began an M.S. in Biomedical Sciences aimed at “[s]tudents seeking to increase their competitiveness for admission to graduate and professional schools.”⁵ It enrolled 10 students in its inaugural year, and 16 students in 2019-20.⁶ Virtually all of the students in the Vanderbilt program obtain the M.S. degree. Union University offers a Master’s of Science in Biology with a pre-professional track for those wishing to prepare for a more advanced health-care program. However, the Integrated Postsecondary Education System records no degrees awarded in it for at least the past three years. Finally,

³<https://www.lipscomb.edu/academics/programs/biomolecular-science>

⁴<https://www.lipscomb.edu/sites/default/files/2020-07/student-achievement-2020.pdf>.

⁵<https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/postbac/>

⁶<https://news.vumc.org/2019/09/09/year-two-for-masters-program-in-biomedical-sciences/>

Lincoln Memorial offers a program in biomedical sciences that is aimed at enhancing a student's "academic qualifications." Lincoln does not publish its program enrollments. In 2020, it awarded 58 master's degrees in the National Center for Education Statistic's category of miscellaneous ("other") biology or biomedical degrees. It's very difficult to ascertain how many of these were in biomedical science but we would presume that it was a substantial number of these. Institutions in Tennessee thus combine to produce 60 to 80 master's degrees per year directly in this area (the range mostly due to lack of knowledge about the Lincoln Memorial program).

The Meharry Medical Center has a large master's program in Health Sciences. It aims to "enhance student preparation for professional careers in health sciences."⁷ This is a much broader purpose than that of the proposed MTSU program or the others noted above. It's unclear how many, if any, of its enrollees are in fact preparing to apply for a medical doctorate. But for purposes of comparison, the program has expanded considerably, tripling the number of degrees awarded since 2015. For academic year 2021-22, it admitted 126 students out of 272 applicants.⁸

All of the above programs are at private institutions. The state has two public university M.S. programs in biomedical sciences, if we include ETSU's biomedical concentration within its M.S. in Biology program. Both are relatively small. These programs, however, are not intended for students wishing to prepare for a medical doctoral program. ETSU's program is focused upon preparation to do research, though it notes the concentration may be of interest to those needing more preparation to be admitted into a medical school.⁹ ETSU does not annually report publicly enrollments or degrees by concentration, but when disclosed, total enrollment in the biomedical concentration is around ten students. In 2020 there were thirteen. ETSU graduated six students total in its M.S. in Biology in 2020. It typically awards between 10 and 15 M.S. degrees in Biology per year.¹⁰ The second program, at the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center, is focused upon Laboratory Research and Management. Three students were attending in 2021.¹¹

In total, the state has three active master's programs similar to that proposed by MTSU. All are private, all are smaller than the national average. In addition, there is the partially overlapping program offered at Meharry.

⁷<https://home.mmc.edu/school-of-graduate-studies-research/>

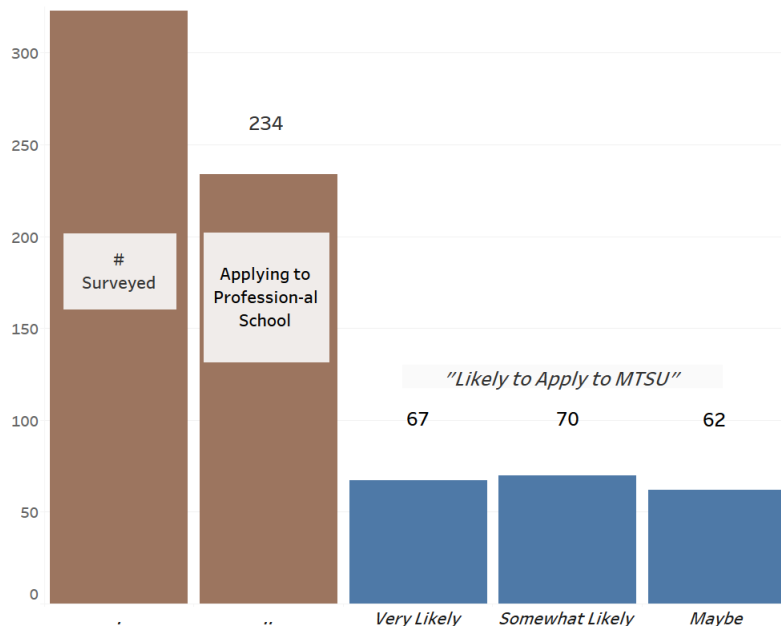
⁸Numbers from the Meharry Fact Book, various years.<https://home.mmc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Fact-Book-2021.pdf>

⁹https://www.etsu.edu/cas/biology/academics/ms_biomed.php

¹⁰None of these degrees are credited to the biomedical concentration in IPEDS though it is unclear if this is because ETSU does not place them under the appropriate CIP code. <https://www.etsu.edu/winsv-ir/fact/factbooks.aspx>. See particularly the factbooks of 2018 and 2020 and <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/Data.aspx>.

¹¹<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNTAyYTBmYzItMWRlMS00YmFhLWE4OTQtMzQ0N2EwZDdhNTI4IiwidCI6IjUxNTgxM2Q5LTcxN2QtNDVxZC05ZWVhLTlhYTE5YzA5ZDZmOSIsImMiOiJN9>

Figure 4: MTSU Undergraduate Survey Results



1 MTSU Student Survey

In Spring 2022, a survey of student interest in this program was conducted. The survey included students in five different upper division biology and chemistry courses.¹² Of the 323 surveyed students, 234 indicated they intended to apply for admission to a health professional school upon obtaining their undergraduate degree. Their responses are shown in Figure 4. Fifty-nine percent (n=137) indicated they would be somewhat or very likely to apply to the MTSU program if they did not gain admission. If we include those responding “maybe,” over eighty percent of the surveyed students had some interest in the MTSU program. The survey responses showed that location and affordability were key factors in the student responses. Even the enrollment of a modest percentage claiming they would be likely to apply would produce a substantial number of students.

The sizable national growth in students seeking this master’s, the steady number of state applicants into medical programs, the fact that Tennessee has only three other programs directly in this area, and the survey results all point in the same direction: that this program would likely attract a significant number of students. Based upon the survey, the dearth of alternatives, the lower tuition than these alternatives, and the national average program size, enrollment in the MTSU program should be expected to exceed the national program average of thirty-two entering students per year.

¹²The courses were Immunology, General Physiology, Cellular and Molecular Biology, Organic Chemistry, Senior Seminar, and Biochemistry.

Part II

Employment

The proposed program is aimed at assisting admission to a doctoral health sciences program. However the M.S. degree itself is a terminal degree for purposes of employment. We thus examine both paths.

It is likely no surprise that employment prospects are strong across almost all occupations requiring a medical doctorate (including veterinarians). The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development's "jobs4tn" website projects well over 400 job openings annually in them.

In fact, the number of advertised jobs vastly exceeds those searching for them. As examples, in March 2022, there were 190 job openings for family physicians with one candidate available. There were eighty-eight available jobs as dentists and two candidates available while 125 veterinarian positions competed for five candidates.¹³ Across the board, securing employment is almost certain. The practical obstacle is gaining a seat in a relevant medical school, which, after all, is the aim of the proposed program.

But what is the market for those with an M.S. in Biomedical Science that do not then enter a medical program? The wide range of career options available, which extend from laboratory work to becoming a medical writer, make this a bit difficult to summarize. In addition, the United States Department of Labor Statistics does not have an occupation code for Biomedical Scientist, meaning employment in the field is not tracked. Nevertheless, both the U.S. and the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development list the closely related "medical science" occupation as having a "bright" employment outlook.¹⁴ Tennessee predicts a twenty-two percent increase in employment over the years 2018-28, while the U.S. sees seventeen percent growth per year over 2020-30.¹⁵ Twenty-five percent of these jobs require a master's or are filled by someone with a master's. The state's Department of Labor and Workforce development expects there to be 210 job openings in this field annually in coming years. In March 2022, the state had only four candidates for 42 open positions.¹⁶

THEC's most recent Academic Supply and Occupational Demand study similarly places the health sciences cluster among the state's top in-demand occupations.¹⁷ That study estimates sixteen percent growth for this cluster over 2020 to 2030. The estimates of both THEC and the state substantially outstrip the supply of Tennessee students

¹³These figures are as of March 7, 2022. <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/analyzer/drill/drill.aspx?enc=e7AKr7bjUGRBEdrMte14UU/yogJNLO8Pv84AeQ47o7RYOsKziYKrbxJIUPWYQhnk>

¹⁴The U.S. evaluation is available at O*NET, <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/19-1042.00>. O*Net does not have a job classification entitled "Biomedical Scientist." Note that medical science is a distinct occupation from medical doctorates.

¹⁵The growth rates for similar occupations, such as biological technicians, are very similar. E.g. <https://www.onetonline.org/link/localtrends/19-4021.00?st=TN&g=Go>

¹⁶March 6, 2022. <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/profiles/profileDetails.aspx?enc=e7AKr7bjUGRBEdrMte14UU/yogJNLO8Pv84AeQ47o7Tom9OikYPm3HhcTQBWcV9oX4ihyr0r7zGnYfjFDN0eSQ==>

¹⁷Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Improving the Pipeline for Tennessee's Workforce: Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report 2022, <https://www.tn.gov/thec/research/supply-and-demand.html>

graduating with biomedical science degrees.¹⁸

The conclusion is that students that completed an M.S. program in Biomedical Science are all but assured of a well-paying job if they are then accepted into a medical, dentistry, veterinarian, or similar doctoral program. If they chose not to pursue this route, or if they are unable to get into one of these schools, they will still enjoy solid job prospects given the strong employment growth in health care and the field of biomedical sciences.

Part III

Conclusion

An MTSU M.S. program in Biomedical Sciences would be only the fourth in Tennessee focused upon the training needed to enter a medical, dentistry, veterinarian, or similar school. It would be the first public institution with such a program. National trends, a student survey, and the size of the similar programs all suggest that it would attract thirty or more students per year. Graduates would assuredly find employment should they go on to a medical school. But even if they did not, employment prospects for those with an M.S. in Biomedical Sciences are good, and expected to get better. Indeed, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development designates the cluster of occupations that include biomedical scientists as in “short supply.”¹⁹ From the data presented here, we conclude that this program is needed. It would be successful in gaining students and those students would enter a very favorable job market.

¹⁸<https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/LabSupplyDetails.aspx?geo=470100000&time=20180100&session=LABSUPPLY&subsession=99&clustercode=15.3110000&onelic=True> https://www.jobs4tn.gov/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/LMI/Publications/Tennessee_Long_Term_Outlook_to_2028.pdf

¹⁹For medical science, see: https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/lmi/profiles/profileSummary.aspx?session=occ_detail&valueName=occupation. But related fields are designated similarly.



DR. STEVEN GENTILE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
312 ROSA L. PARKS AVENUE, 9TH FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243
(615) 741-3605

TO: Dr. Mark Byrnes, University Provost
Middle Tennessee State University

FROM: Dr. Julie A. Roberts, Chief Academic Officer
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

SUBJECT: Middle Tennessee State University
Letter of Notification: Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science (MS)

DATE: February 21, 2024

Thank you for the submission of the Letter of Notification (LON) for the Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science (MS) program at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). Per THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process, the LON is evaluated on the following criteria: alignment with state master plan and institutional mission; feasibility; institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program; and program costs and revenues.

After reviewing the revised LON, I approve MTSU's plan to develop the New Academic Program Proposal (NAPP) for the Biomedical Sciences, MS. As MTSU continues to develop the proposed program, all concerns italicized on the attached LON evaluation must be reflected in the NAPP. It is understood the proposed program will be developed in accordance with the mission of MTSU and will meet the Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education 2015-2025 degree completion and workforce development objectives.

Attachment

cc: Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, MTSU, President
Dr. Steven Gentile, THEC, Executive Director
Dr. Amy Aldridge Sanford, MTSU, Vice Provost of Academic Programs
Ms. Anjelica Jones, THEC, Director of Academic Affairs
Dr. Katherine Brackett, THEC, Director of Academic Affairs

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Letter of Notification Evaluation
February 21, 2024



The evaluation of the Letter of Notification (LON) is in accordance with the THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process. The evaluation is conducted by interested parties and THEC staff. The LON is posted on the THEC website for a 15-day period of comment by interested parties. Based on the internal and external evaluation, THEC will make a determination to support, not to support, or defer a decision based on a revised LON.

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University	LON Submission Date: January 10, 2024
Academic Program, Degree Designation, Concentration(s): Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science (MS)	
Proposed CIP Code and Title: 26.0102 Biomedical Sciences, General	
Proposed Implementation Date: May 2025	
Time Period Posted on Website for Public Comment: January 10-January 25, 2024	
Academic Program Liaison(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amy Aldridge Sanford, PhD, Vice Provost for Academic Programs, amy.aldridge.sanford@mtsu.edu 	

Note: Comments in italics within this document should be addressed in the NAPP.

Letter of support from President/Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter of support dated January 11, 2024, sent from MTSU President McPhee was included.
Section II: Background	
Background on academic program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposed MS in Biomedical Sciences would directly support workforce development in many of the areas of healthcare including pharmaceutical research and sales, clinical research and clinical trial coordinators, biomedical and biotechnology research, and forensic science testing. The proposed program can support diagnostic positions by focusing electives on lab and technique-based courses. The proposed program has both direct workforce development, as well as the indirect workforce development of helping underserved students gain admission to pre-health professional programs by improving the competitiveness of their applications.
Purpose and nature of academic program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed program is a 30-credit hour fully on-ground program, with the objective for students to complete in 10 months. The curriculum will consist of a 16-credit core of foundational courses with opportunities for electives (14 credit hours) based on the student's intended career path. The proposed program would be the only public option in the state of Tennessee for a nonthesis MS degree in Biomedical Sciences

	<p>aimed to prepare students either for professional school or direct entry into the workforce. Existing programs in the state are focused on research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed MS would help pre-professional students increase their competitiveness for medical, dental, or pharmaceutical schools, or physician assistant programs by offering a bridge of coursework from undergraduate to medical school.
<p>Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program aligns with the State Master by acknowledging a critical need for distinctive graduate and professional level programs by providing graduates with the groundwork needed to enter the healthcare industry and accommodate the expected 12 percent population growth in the state, as well as the 25 percent population growth in the greater Nashville area by ensuring adequate healthcare practitioners are available to serve the population. ▪ The Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency has authorized expansion of area hospitals increasing available beds across the state requiring training and recruiting of healthcare professionals and associated support personnel in the area. ▪ The proposed Biomedical Sciences, MS program will help to address the growing need for healthcare workers by preparing Tennessee graduates for acceptance into medical, dental, pharmacy, and other professional schools as well as preparing diagnostic and pharmaceutical support personnel. ▪ The proposed program also aligns with the State Master Plan by minimizing redundancy in degree offerings by being the only public institution offering this type of degree in Middle Tennessee and is well situated to meet the needs of historically underserved student populations, who sometimes have difficult starts in higher education and therefore are less competitive on paper during the graduate application process. ▪ The proposed program aligns with the institutional master plan by advancing “academic quality through excellence in teaching.” The proposed program also aligns with two of the three listed Strategic Directions, by creating and supporting an interdisciplinary graduate program designed to provide breadth of knowledge .
<p>Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This proposed program will consist primarily of existing courses within the College of Basic and Applied Sciences and will only require minimal additional resources. ▪ The college currently has 75 full-time faculty in the departments of Chemistry and Biology available to support and teach in the proposed MS program. ▪ The proposed program is unlikely to negatively impact enrollments in existing thesis-based M.S. programs at other institutions or the existing MSPS offered by the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, which has a business focused.

Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions

- Currently two public institutions offer degrees with similar names and/or CIP codes.
 - ETSU has a Biomedical concentration within their MS in Biology.
 - UTHSC offers an MS in Biomedical Science with a concentration in laboratory research and management.
- Currently five private institutions offer degrees with similar names and/or CIP codes.
 - Meharry Medical College
 - Lincoln Memorial
 - Lipscomb University
 - Union University
 - Vanderbilt University

CIP Code	College/ University	Program	2022-2021	2021-2020	2020-2019
26.01 01	East Tennessee State University	MS in Biology	17	12	11
26.01 02	University of Tennessee Health Science Center	MS in Biomedical Science	3	7	1
	Meharry Medical College	MS in Health Sciences	122	86	46
	Lincoln Memorial University	MS in Biomedical Sciences, Anatomical Sciences, and Veterinary Biomedical Sciences	60	97	85
	Lipscomb University	MS in Biomolecular Sciences	33	33	24
	Union University	MS in Biology	0	0	0

	Vanderbilt University	MS in Biomedical Science	42	38	33
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please provide CIP codes for the programs at the private institutions. 				
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed program does not have a special accrediting body. The only notifications that will be required will be the standard reporting of new programs to SACSCOC. 				
Administrative Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MS in Biomedical Science will be an interdisciplinary program including faculty from the Departments of Biology and Chemistry in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences. Faculty will remain part of their home departments while teaching courses in this program. There will be a program director and an administrative assistant/advisor, with the program director reporting to the chair of the Department of Chemistry. 				
Section III: Feasibility Study					
Student interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A survey of current MTSU students in upper division biology and chemistry courses was taken in spring of 2022 to explore the level of interest in this program. Of the 339 students that were surveyed, 266 of those students plan to go to a health professional school. Of the respondents, 59 percent said that they were very or somewhat likely to “enroll in a one-year, nonthesis master’s degree program at MTSU that is specifically designed to increase your qualifications for professional school.” Student interest in programs like the one proposed has also increased, with the number of degrees awarded tripling between 2011 and 2018. 				
Local and Regional Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupational projections through 2028 indicate there will be over 30,000 healthcare practitioner and technical opportunities in Tennessee. According to the Nashville Health Sector Research Report, Nashville is home to more than 500 health care companies; data indicate that “121,027 persons employed in the Nashville MSA” (p. 15) are in direct health care services. The report indicates that an additional 67,000 jobs are anticipated from 2018-2023 due to new jobs and retirements. The 2018 report by the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development indicated that ambulatory healthcare services (outpatient healthcare) and hospitals are key industries in the state and specifically in Middle Tennessee. Both ambulatory healthcare services and hospitals are included in the top 5 industries in the state, with the healthcare and social assistance industry employment growing 8 percent between 2013 to 2018. 				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Tennessee Departments of Labor & Workforce Development's report, "The Demand for STEM Occupations in Tennessee" lists medical scientists as an occupation expected to grow 22 percent within the state between 2016-2026. ▪ Please address the local and regional demand for the specific jobs in which proposed degree will qualify graduates to apply for.
Employer Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report ranks healthcare as one of the six occupational groups in high demand. ▪ The Nashville metropolitan area, including Davidson, Rutherford, and Williamson counties, is the fastest growing metropolitan region in Tennessee with a growth rate of 15.56 percent for 2010-2018 which corresponds to a growth in healthcare needs. ▪ There has also been a recent increase in hospital beds across Rutherford County with an anticipated increase in Davidson County to follow. ▪ The AAMC Tennessee Physician Workforce Profile shows that a third of practicing physicians in the state are over the age of 60. Which increases the need for new physicians soon. ▪ The AAMC workforce report for 2019 indicates that 66.7% of the physicians practicing in Tennessee completed either undergraduate or graduate medical education in Tennessee. Thus, a post-baccalaureate pre-medical program at a public university in Tennessee will aid in retaining more physicians in Tennessee. • Graduates of the proposed program will be qualified to work in pharmaceutical sales, clinical research or clinical trial coordination, medical testing, and forensic sciences. • In the NAPP, please provide additional data on employer need for the potential career paths listed above.
Community and Industry Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters of support were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Quillen College of Medicine at ETSU ○ The Physician Assistant Program at MTSU ○ The Vanderbilt School of Medicine ○ Aegis Sciences Corporation ○ Volunteer Botanicals ○ Life Sciences Tennessee

Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Projected Enrollment and Graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projected attrition is based on the 80-90 percent graduation rates observed in the MS programs in Chemistry and Biology and the MS in Professional Science programs at MTSU. <table border="1" data-bbox="561 1583 1425 1852"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Academic Year</th> <th>Projected Total Fall Enrollment</th> <th>Projected Attrition</th> <th>Projected Graduates</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2025-2026</td> <td>15</td> <td>2</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2026-2027</td> <td>17</td> <td>3</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>2027-2028</td> <td>18</td> <td>3</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>2028-2029</td> <td>20</td> <td>3</td> <td>15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates	1	2025-2026	15	2	9	2	2026-2027	17	3	14	3	2027-2028	18	3	14	4	2028-2029	20	3	15
Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates																						
1	2025-2026	15	2	9																						
2	2026-2027	17	3	14																						
3	2027-2028	18	3	14																						
4	2028-2029	20	3	15																						

	5	2029-2030	22	4	16
Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver Proposed Program					
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning in Year 1, support for up to four adjuncts to cover up to 32 workload units per year are being budgeted. The cost (\$800 per workload unit) is based upon the standard adjunct pay rate at MTSU. A summer stipend (\$5,000) for the program coordinator is budgeted based on the standard rate for graduate program coordinators at MTSU. The total annual cost is \$25,600. An existing faculty member will assume responsibilities for the Graduate Program Director role, and total annual cost will be \$14,600. 				
Non-Instructional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual cost (including benefits) of half-time effort to Academic Affairs will be around \$40,000. The cost share will begin on 09/01/2024. 				
Graduate Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new graduate assistants will be needed for this program. At present, there are no expectations of any incremental graduate assistant resources. 				
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no professional accrediting organization for this program and SACSCOC notification will be handled through the existing coordinator at MTSU, so no expense is anticipated. 				
Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the THEC approval process, the program will require an external reviewer in the planning year, with a one-time cost estimated at \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend and travel costs. 				
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No equipment costs are required to develop or run this program. 				
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no new information technology costs associated with this program. 				
Library Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new library acquisitions will be required. 				
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initial cost for marketing is \$2,000, and a smaller annual amount of \$500 will be for restocking of consumable items. 				
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new facilities will be required for this program. 				
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds for either the coordinator and/or the staff position to visit area colleges for recruiting purposes are budgeted at \$2,000 annually. 				
Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miscellaneous expenses associated with operating the proposed program, such as office supplies, and postage are included in this budget item valued at \$2,000 annually. 				
Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program					
Tuition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is assumed that the proposed program will be a mix of one-year (taking 15 credit hours per term) and two-year students (taking 7-8 credit hours per term), with the majority opting for the faster completion allowed by the 10-month (two-term) option. This works out to an average of 25 credit hours (over two terms) per student. The cost for 12 credit hours in one semester is \$6,372 and the 				

	cost for 13 credit hours in the other semester is \$6,476, for a total student tuition and fee cost in one-year of \$12,848.
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No grants are anticipated to fund this program.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No other revenue is anticipated at this time.
Appendices	
Letters of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters of support for the proposed program were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kara M. Allen KasaKaitas, Director, American Chemical Society ○ Glenn Perdue, Chairman, Life Science Tennessee ○ Marie Patterson, MTSU Physician Assistant Studies Program Director, MTSU ○ Stephanie Cole, Admissions Counselor, Quillen College of Medicine (ETSU) ○ Robert Carnahan, Associate Professor, Vanderbilt University ○ Thomas Woodward, Lead Scientist, Volunteer Botanicals
THEC Financial Projections Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial Projections Form provided in Appendix C of the LON.
Public Comment	
Public Comments Received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public comment was received from Maria Cronley, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, APSU. Attached in Appendix A. <i>Please address the public comment received from APSU in the NAPP.</i>

Appendix A:

Dear Dr. Roberts,

Austin Peay State University (APSU) objects to the proposed [M.S. in Biomedical Science degree at Middle State University \(MTSU\)](#). The proposed program appears to be duplicative of a subpart of APSU's [M.S. in Biology degree](#). APSU appreciates the continuous efforts to innovate and expand academic offerings, however; this proposal appears to be a disguised replication of an existing degree program under a different name.

APSU's objection is predicated on two factors: 1) an unnecessary duplication of degrees by way of a nomenclature change and 2) a lack of a clear proposed curriculum to justify MTSU's proposed M.S. in Biomedical Science degree. APSU is concerned by the precedent that MTSU's proposed degree would establish through the misrepresentation of an existing degrees' merits simply by changing its name. Typically, M.S. Biology degrees include coursework that satisfies pre-professional healthcare academic pathways to professional healthcare graduate programs (APSU's [list of all APSU's M.S. Biology courses](#) where 40% of the courses could be considered "biomedical") at Tennessee's two leading public medical schools at [ETSU](#) and [UTHSC](#).

The lack of any described curriculum within MTSU's Letter of Notification (LON) makes it difficult to discern. As such, the true academic merits of MTSU's proposal cannot be determined. The LON for [MTSU's proposed M.S. Biomedical Science degree states](#), "The 30-credit hour curriculum will consist of a 16-credit hour core of foundational courses (physiology, biochemistry, and cell and molecular biology) with opportunities for electives based on the individual student's career plan." MTSU suggests that the proposed degree is intended for students improving their knowledge and potential to gain admission into a healthcare professional degree programs, like medical school. The proposal's lack of a described curriculum does not provide MTSU with a defensible position as stewards of public funds. It appears that MTSU is merely repackaging existing courses from other degree programs and begs questions regarding the integrity and validity of the proposal. Of note, the letters of support are lacking from [UTHSC which is one of two public medical schools for Tennesseans](#). Vanderbilt University's Medical School [tends to accept a small number of Tennesseans for medical school](#). As such, Vanderbilt University's Medical School should not be a consideration for MTSU's proposed graduate degree. Also of note, [Vanderbilt University's data doesn't list any MTSU graduates gaining acceptance to Vanderbilt University's Medical School since 2019](#).

The inability to review MTSU's proposed curriculum for the M.S. in Biomedical Science is challenging to provide an accurate assessment, but it appears that the core content aligns closely to APSU's established M.S. in Biology. Additionally, similar concerns could be asserted by other Biology and Biochemistry graduate degree programs offered in TN including the existing [M.S. in Biology at MTSU](#). This apparent duplication raises questions about the necessity and academic integrity of introducing a program that, on the surface, seems to differ only in nomenclature.

APSU takes pride in the rigorous standards and unique features of APSU's [M.S. in Biology \(list of all APSU's M.S. Biology courses](#) where 40% of the courses could be considered "biomedical") and the distinctiveness of all APSU's degrees. Any attempt to imitate or replicate these degrees with varying naming conventions undermines the distinctiveness and credibility of APSU's academic programs. Such actions may introduce confusion among prospective students who may struggle to distinguish the genuine differences between the two programs including the Biology program at MTSU (i.e., [M.S. in Biology](#) and [M.S. in Professional Science](#)).

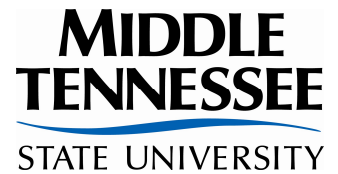
APSU respectfully requests that MTSU reconsiders the proposed program in light of its striking similarities to APSU's established M.S. in Biology and other public universities' graduate-level Biology programs. APSU recommends that MTSU consider adding an academic concentration within MTSU's existing M.S. in Biology for a pre-professional healthcare track.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and welcome the opportunity to further engage constructive dialogue to address these objections and concerns collaboratively. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maria L. Cronley, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs
Austin Peay State University

University Provost
 110 Cope Administration Building
 Middle Tennessee State University
 Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132
 Office: (615) 898-2880 • Fax: (615) 898-5029



Julie A. Roberts, PhD
 Chief Academic Officer
 TN Higher Education Commission
 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., 9th Floor
 Nashville, TN 37243

May 8, 2024

Dear Dr. Roberts:

Our sincerest gratitude to you and THEC’s Academic Affairs staff for the thoughtful review of MTSU’s LON for a **Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science program**. Where appropriate, we have incorporated the suggestions below and highlighted in *yellow* in the revised document.

LON Section	THEC Reviewer Comment	MTSU Response	page #
Existing programs offered	<i>Please provide CIP codes for the programs at the private institutions.</i>	These CIP codes are now included, with the exception of the program at Union, which was discontinued several years ago.	9
Local and Regional Demand	<i>Please address the local and regional demand for the specific jobs in which proposed degree will qualify graduates to apply for.</i>	Current employment opportunities listed on Indeed and CareerBuilder were explored, and the results are listed in this section to further support the actual growth in job openings.	11
Employer Demand	<i>In the NAPP, please provide additional data on employer need to the potential career paths listed above.</i>	Employment and professional program growth have been expanded as related to the results noted in the prior section.	13
Public Comments Received	<i>Please address the public comment received from Maria L. Cronley, APSU Provost and Senior VPAA.</i>	It appears that Dr. Cronley’s concerns centered on (a) duplication of the M.S. in Biology at both APSU and MTSU and (b) lack of clear proposed curriculum in the LON. Specific curriculum is not required in the LON process, but MTSU believes that specific curriculum provided in the NAPP provides clarity that curriculum is not being unnecessarily duplicated at APSU or MTSU with the proposed M.S. in Biomedical Sciences at MTSU. This non-thesis degree is an interdisciplinary one, requiring both biology and chemistry courses and a 16-credit hour core. APSU’s M.S. in Biology (nonthesis) requires an 8-hour core, and the entire degree is made up of Biology credits. MTSU’s M.S. in Biology does not have a non-thesis option, and like APSU, requires biology courses only.	N/A

Again, thank you for the support as we pursue this degree option for students at MTSU. We look forward to the continued review process.

Sincerely,

Section VII – Implementation Timeline

Proposed notification to SACSCOC: N/A

Professional Disciplinary Accreditation: N/A

Proposed dates for external review site visit: July 2024

Estimated date of submission of the external review report to THEC and the institution:
August 2024

Estimated date of institution’s response to external review: September 2024

Proposed date of institutional governing board’s meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval: December 2024

Proposed date of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval: January 2025

Proposed implementation date when students will enroll in the proposed academic program:
May 2025

Section VIII - Curriculum

Program Specific Goals and Objectives

Provide the program-specific goals/objectives for the proposed program. Goals/objectives should represent planned outcomes for the proposed program and include a plan for assessment of these goals/objectives.

The purpose of the M.S. in Biomedical Sciences program is to serve as a post-baccalaureate program for students interested in health professions requiring acceptance into medical, dental, pharmacy, or other professional schools. This degree will particularly benefit students who have completed their bachelor’s degree but have not been accepted to a professional school, allowing students to demonstrate their ability to negotiate both the academic rigor and the course loads of professional school while building their knowledge base to excel at the MCAT, PCAT or other professional school standardized admission tests.

At the completion of the program of study, students will:

1. Have a deep understanding of physiology, biochemistry and cell and molecular biology preparing them for any of the following:
 - a. application to healthcare professional schools/programs;
 - b. PhD programs;
 - c. positions in biomedical research laboratories;
 - d. employment in clinical research; and/or
 - e. pharmaceutical or biotechnology careers.
2. Be prepared to improve their performance on professional school exams (MCAT, DAT)

if needed.

3. Learn how to find and read biomedical literature, how to distinguish different types of studies in the biomedical literature (basic, translational and clinical research), and how to evaluate the relative strength of published literature in the biomedical sciences.
4. Better understand professional school application processes and expectations, jobs in the biomedical field open to those with an M.S. in Biomedical Sciences, and interviewing skills.

The assessment of these goals will come from the student learning outcomes outline and linked to goals in the next section.

Student Learning Outcomes

Outline the student learning outcomes for the proposed program. Outcomes should clearly state the specific and measurable outcomes students will display to verify learning has occurred and include information regarding how each student learning outcome will be assessed.

1. Students will be able to understand and explain the cellular and physiological processes occurring in the human body.

Measurements:

- This understanding will be assessed on a regular basis in core classes such as BIOL 6390 and BIOL 6270 using problem sets, quizzes, and exams as the material is covered.
- A more comprehensive assessment of understanding will be made in the final exams in these same classes.
- Retention of this material will be observed by its use and application in elective classes on assignments and assessments in those classes.

Associated Program level Outcomes: 1 and 2

2. Students will be able to recognize and explain the anatomy and function of the human body and how abnormal functioning related to disease.

Measurements:

- This understanding will be assessed on a regular basis in core classes such as BIOL 6315 and BIOL 6270 using problem sets, class discussion, quizzes, and exams as the material is covered.
- A more comprehensive assessment of understanding, use, and retention will be made in the final exams in these classes.
- Retention of this material and the ability to translate it to different situations will be made in the assignments and assessments in elective classes.

Associated Program level Outcomes: 1, 2 and 3

3. Students will understand the chemical processes occurring within the human body and be able to explain how they underlie and enable observed biological processes.

Measurements:

- A combination of problem sets, quizzes, and exams will be used in CHEM 6500 and 6510 to assess understanding as the material is covered.
- Final exams and projects will be used to assess the ability to integrate and use this chemical information.

- Application and retention of this material will be assessed via performance on exams and other assessments in elective classes in this program.

Associated Program level Outcomes: 1,2 and 3

4. Students will be able to explain the fundamentals of research design and analysis and use this knowledge to select appropriate methods for a given research situation.

Measurements:

- Research design and methods is a key aspect of how information that is being presented has been obtained. As a result, it is found in every class in the program. In these classes, this outcome will be clearly presented in literature reviews and readings. Meeting this outcome will be best assessed via class presentations and discussions.
- End of class projects will be a more summative assessment of research design and methods and will also appear in the majority of the classes in this program (core and electives).
- Discussions of research design and methods will be included in the Seminar course and will be assessed as a part of class discussions.

Associated Program level Outcomes: 3

5. Students will develop and refine interviewing skills and a deeper understanding of the health field and health-related professional programs.

Measurements:

- These skills will be primarily addressed and assessed in the required seminar class, with an opportunity to both present and critique mock interviews as well as guidance from expert interviewers.
- Another opportunity for assessment and feedback will be mock interviews that will be held as part of this program, but not part of a specific class. This will be done before a panel of faculty who are trained and experienced in health professional school interviews.
- Presentations and question and answer sessions in the required seminar class will also provide an opportunity to learn the expectations of health-related professional programs
- Finally, success in admission to health-related professional programs or employment will also serve as an assessment method of whether this goal is being met.

Associated Program level Outcomes: 4

Academic Program Requirements

Include the required number of semester credit hours (SCH), courses (course prefix and number, title, SCH), and any special requirements including thesis, internships, practicum, etc.

Both required and elective course offerings will be an interdisciplinary effort between the Department of Biology and the Department of Chemistry. This is a 30-credit hour nonthesis program with a 16-credit hour core.

Biomedical Science Program: 30 credit minimum		
Required Courses* (16 CH)		
BIOL 6270	Cell Metabolism and Human Disease	3 credits
BIOL 6315	Mammalian Physiology	3 credits
BIOL 6390	Advanced Cell and Molecular Biology	3 credits

BMS 6000	Seminar in Biomedical Sciences	1 credit
CHEM 6500	Biochemistry I	3 credits
CHEM 6510	Biochemistry II	3 credits
Elective Courses** (14 CH)		
BIOL 5130/5131	Histology/Lab	4 credits
BIOL 5170	Endocrinology	4 credits
BIOL 5460/5461	Human Genetics/Lab	3 credits
BIOL 5550	Biotechnology	3 credits
BIOL 5560	Neurobiology	4 credits
BIOL 6350/6351	Biostatistical Analysis/Lab	4 credits
BIOL 6380/6381	Experimental Immunology/Lab	4 credits
BIOL 6430	Clinical and Pathogenic Microbiology	4 credits
BIOL 6440	Advanced Virology	4 credits
BIOL 6450	Advancements in Molecular Genetics	4 credits
BIOL 6500	Special Problems in Biology	1-4 credits
BIOL 6720/6721	Advanced Animal Development/Lab	4 credits
CHEM 5100	Organic Spectroscopy	3 credits
CHEM 6100	Intermediate Organic Chemistry	3 credits
CHEM 6110	Topics in Organic Chemistry***	3 credits
CHEM 6150	Bioorganic Chemistry	3 credits
CHEM 6520	Topics in Biochemistry***	3 credits
CHEM 6530	Biochemical Techniques	2 credits
CHEM 6540	Foundations of Enzymology	3 credits

*Core courses may be substituted with appropriate courses from the list of electives with proof of success in a similar senior level undergraduate course and approval from the program director.

**Additional elective courses may be used with approval of the program director.

***Topics courses may be repeated for additional credit provided the course topic is different.

Also note that no more than 9 hours of 5000 level coursework may be applied toward this degree.

Existing and New Courses

List existing and new courses for the proposed academic program including a catalog description and credit hours for each course. Include syllabi for all courses and an Appendix to the NAPP.

Existing Courses

All courses listed in the curriculum with BIOL and CHEM prefixes and course numbers exist, with the exception of BIOL 6315 Mammalian Physiology which is currently being redesigned and in the approval process. They are/will be offered regularly at MTSU.

Prefix	Course Number	Title	Catalog description	Credit Hours
BIOL	5130/ 5131	Histology/Histology Lab	Microscopic anatomy of vertebrate cells, tissues, and organs.	4
BIOL	5170	Endocrinology	Structure, function, and integrative mechanisms of vertebrate	4

			endocrine organs, with additional attention to invertebrate hormones.	
BIOL	5460/ 5461	Human Genetics/Lab	Application of the fundamental laws of inheritance to humans.	3
BIOL	5550	Biotechnology	Instruction in both theory and application of current research methodologies in biology and molecular biology. Topics include immunochemistry, polymerase chain reaction, restriction enzyme analysis, and electrophoresis.	3
BIOL	5560	Neurobiology	Introduces comparative neurobiology. Topics include the basic structure and function of the nerve cell and organization of nervous systems of representative species of invertebrate and vertebrate animals.	4
BIOL	6270	Cell Metabolism and Human Disease	Metabolic pathways of mammalian cells and the diseases that result from genetic defects that disrupt their normal function.	3
BIOL	6350/ 6351	Biostatistical Analysis/Lab	Intermediate-level introduction to biostatistical procedures used in research.	4
BIOL	6380/ 6381	Experimental Immunology/Lab	Mechanisms of immunity including the more recent developments in immunology.	4
BIOL	6390	Advanced Cell and Molecular Biology	Molecular biology of the cell with emphasis on current experimental techniques.	3
BIOL	6430	Clinical and Pathogenic Microbiology	Comprehensive coverage of the most recent discoveries and techniques used for the identification of pathogenic organisms and their relationships to disease processes.	4
BIOL	6440	Advanced Virology	Emphasizes the main virus families and their biochemical composition. Experimental approaches and techniques will be developed in order to identify and manipulate viruses.	4

BIOL	6450	Advancements in Molecular Genetics	Recent advancements in microbial genetics and gene manipulation with emphasis on applications of molecular genetics, including gene regulation and recombinant DNA technology.	4
BIOL	6500	Special Problems in Biology	Plan, implement, and interpret a research problem in some area of biology. Available topics limited to areas of graduate faculty interest and expertise.	1-4
BIOL	6720/ 6721	Advanced Animal Development/Lab	Processes and underlying molecular mechanisms by which a single fertilized egg develops into an adult organism. Focuses on vertebrate development, including insights gained from other model organisms.	4
CHEM	5100	Organic Spectroscopy	Theory of and practice in the interpretation of mass, infrared, Raman, ultraviolet-visible, and nuclear magnetic resonance spectra.	3
CHEM	6100	Intermediate Organic Chemistry	Concepts and modern theories of organic chemistry: stereochemistry of reactions, mechanistic interpretation of organic reactions, and multistep synthesis.	3
CHEM	6110	Topics in Organic Chemistry	A selection of modern topics.	3
CHEM	6150	Bioorganic Chemistry	Focuses on the structure and function of bioorganic molecules (i.e., peptides, proteins, nucleic acids, carbohydrates, and peptidomimetics), similarities between enzymatic reactions and bench-top organic reactions, and the techniques and instrumentation used to study bioorganic molecules.	3
CHEM	6500	Biochemistry I	Chemical properties of biological molecules such as proteins, lipids, nucleotides, and carbohydrates.	3

			Chemical basis of enzyme catalysis. Structure of biological membranes.	
CHEM	6510	Biochemistry II	The structure of lipids, amino acids, nucleotides, and nucleic acids and their metabolism at a molecular level. Emphasis on understanding the chemical basis of biological phenomena.	3
CHEM	6520	Topics in Biochemistry	Selected topics of particular interest in biochemistry.	3
CHEM	6530	Biochemical Techniques	Laboratory in biochemical techniques with emphasis on protein purification, enzyme kinetics, carbohydrate and lipid analysis, and manipulation of DNA.	2
CHEM	6540	Foundations of Enzymology	Structure, function, and properties of protein- and ribonucleic acid-based enzymes. Chemical basis for catalysis and the methods used to study enzymes. Examples drawn from the literature to illustrate application of course material to disease.	3

New Courses Needed

84-1

Prefix	Course Number	Title	Catalog description	Credit Hours
BIOL	6315	Mammalian Physiology	Prior courses in genetics and organic chemistry recommended. The study of mammalian physiology through reading and discussion of current literature accompanied by presentations, lecture, notes or video. Human physiology and systems physiology emphasized; discussions about the teaching of physiology may be incorporated. Familiarity with cell and molecular biology recommended. 3 hrs per week	3

BMS	6000	Seminar in Biomedical Sciences	Coaching and mentoring through the application and interview process for health professional programs or jobs, familiarity with human, translational and clinical research and the biomedical literature, and jobs in the biomedical field.	1
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Program of Study

Provide a program of study for full-time students enrolled in the program. The program of study should include all courses listed by semester necessary for students to complete the proposed program.

The M.S. in Biomedical Sciences is designed so that a student could complete it within one academic year if they so desire. They can also elect to take a more traditional multi-year path.

Example of One Year Plan

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
BIOL 6315	3	BIOL 6270	3
BIOL 6390	3	CHEM 6510	3
BMS 6000	1	<i>Electives</i>	8-10
CHEM 6500	3		
<i>Electives</i>	4-6		
Total	14-16	Total	14-16

Example of Multi-Year Plan

Year 1				Year 2			
Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours	Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
BIOL 6315	3	BIOL 6270	3	BIOL 6390	3	<i>Electives</i>	7
BMS 6000	1	CHEM 6510	3	<i>Elective</i>	4		
CHEM 6500	3	<i>Elective</i>	3				
Total	7	Total	9	Total	7	Total	7

Assessment and Evaluation

Identify who will be responsible for conducting program assessments and evaluations.

Assessment and Evaluation of the M.S. in Biomedical Sciences will be conducted internally on an ongoing basis by the Biomedical Sciences director and a faculty advisory board (including at least one faculty member from the Department of Biology and one from the Department of Chemistry) and overseen by the chair of the Department of Chemistry. External assessment and evaluation will be conducted according to the regular schedule for external reviews as

established by university and THEC policies. The office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research is responsible for overseeing these external program reviews.

Provide the schedule for program assessments or evaluations including program evaluations associated with Quality Assurance Funding, institutional program review, student evaluations, faculty review, accreditation, and employer evaluation. Include copies of relevant document, rubrics, or other materials as appendices.

The M.S. in Biomedical Sciences degree program will utilize primarily ongoing summative evaluation to assess the extent to which the program is meeting institutional goals and objectives. The University and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences place instructional and program quality among their highest priorities and will assess both on a regular ongoing basis.

- Student evaluations of courses included in this curriculum will be monitored for course quality every term as is standard practice for all courses. This information will be used on an ongoing basis to inform success and helpful revisions for the future.
- Exit interviews of graduating students with the program director will be used to obtain specific knowledge the perceived value and quality of the curriculum, courses and program for students and will be conducted prior to graduation.
- Acceptance of graduates in an appropriate program, school or career is the ultimate goal of the program. Placement data for new graduates and alum will be tracked and analyzed to identify program strengths as well as new opportunities for program graduates.
- Additional surveys of graduated students will be conducted three and five years after graduation to track a longer term vision of the success and progress of graduates as well as suggestions in terms of what have been the most and least valuable parts of the program for the graduate's future now that they have a longer term vision of where they are headed.
- Employers and/or professional programs will be contacted as well to seek their perspective on the strengths, weaknesses, and effectiveness of the program a year after one of our graduates has entered/joined that company/program.

Articulation and Transfer

For proposed bachelor's programs, indicate all Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTP) that may be acceptable for entry into the proposed program and provide a sample degree plan for transfer students.

Not applicable, this is not a bachelor's degree program.

Section IX - Students

Academic Standards

Clearly state the admission, retention, and graduation standards, which should align with institutional or governing board policy.

All Biomedical Sciences students must meet the established admission, retention, and graduation requirements of the university and the College of Graduate Studies. All entering students should have a bachelor's degree from an accredited university that includes the equivalent of a Biology

minor with a course in Genetics and a course in Microbiology AND an 8 credit hour sequence in General Chemistry and an 8 credit hour sequence in Organic Chemistry.

Students must have a GPA (science and overall, inclusive of repeated grades) of 3.0 or 3.3 (science and overall) in the last 45 hours combined with **one** of the following exam scores that would be consistent with specific professional aspirations:

- Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores of 124/section and 500 total minimum;
- Dental Admission Test (DAT) scores of 17/section minimum;
- Physician Assistant College Admissions Test (PA-CAT) composite score of 510;
- GRE score of 302 combined and 150/section minimum.

The reasoning for considering a separate GPA in the last 45 hours is to allow a student to enter the program if they had a difficult start in college but did build background, study skills and abilities to recover near the end of their undergraduate program. This is the main target group: first generation or disadvantaged students who had a difficult start to college or a difficult transfer from community college to university and now need to demonstrate success in graduate work to compete for admission. There is a considerable population of these students at MTSU and throughout the middle Tennessee area. They will already be familiar with the institution and likely to want to remain close to home. MTSU will specifically target recruiting at campus organizations that engage these students.

In terms of retention and future success, the curriculum has been designed intentionally to mimic that of the first year or two of a health professional program. This feature will demonstrate these students' ability to be successful in this coursework and make the coursework as they start their health professional program, in turn easing their transition to professional school and increase their chance of future success. As a longer-term benefit, improving admissions of these groups will aid in increasing diversity in the healthcare workforce over time.

Given that the M.S. in Biomedical Science is intended to be a 10–18-month program, students will be unlikely to have time to take the appropriate exams prior to application for matriculation at the end of the year. For that reason, exam scores are set at numbers that are consistent with the minimums for matriculants and within the range of students given interviews for professional school acceptance and admission.

Completion of this program in no way guarantees acceptance of a student into any program. The goal is to make students more competitive for admission. Advertising materials for this program will include that information.

Policies governing academic performance requirements and retention standards are found at: http://catalog.mtsu.edu/content.php?catoid=23&navoid=4176#Academic_Regulations, but can be summarized as maintaining a 3.0 GPA in all graduate coursework and receiving at least a B in all coursework counted toward the 30 hours required for graduation.

Marketing and Recruitment

Provide a plan that outlines how the proposed program will market and recruit a diverse population of students including underserved and historically underrepresented students and is aligned with the proposed implementation timeline.

Marketing and recruitment for this degree will include many approaches as follows.

- A web presence through an MTSU web page will be created so that traffic from social media outlets such as X, Instagram, and Facebook can be driven to it. This strategy will make it easier for students to find and contact representatives of our program.
- Print materials (brochures and posters) will be created that can be used at career and graduate fairs in the region. This is included under printing costs in the THEC Financial Projections in Appendix A.
- Contacts will be made with area and regional medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and physician assistant training programs. Referrals from schools and programs are likely to be a substantial source of applicants. Particular emphasis will be placed on University of Tennessee Health Science Center (Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy and their Physician Assistant and Physical Therapy Programs), Quillen College of Medicine and Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy at East Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College and Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and the Physician Assistant Programs at the following universities – Middle Tennessee State University, Trevecca Nazarene University, Lipscomb University, South College, and Bethel College.
- Direct contact and presentations will be made at local pre-health professional clubs on our campus: Pre-Scripts, American Medical Student Association (AMSA), American Medical Women’s Association, Black Students in Medicine, Delta Delta Sigma (the pre-Dental organization at MTSU), Minority Association of Pre-medical Students (MAPS), Pre-Scripts, Pharmacy Club, and Pre-Physician Assistant Society. Information will also be shared with the MTSU Biology Club and the MTSU Chemistry Society.
- Direct interactions will be regularly made and maintained with the undergraduate academic advisors in the Clara Todd Pre-Health Professional Advising Center. Additionally, networking with pre-health professional advisors in regional universities including Tennessee Technological University, Tennessee State University, Austin Peay State University, and University of Tennessee at Chattanooga will be done to make them aware of this program and its intent, and to request that they communicate information about our program to their students as a cost effective, post-baccalaureate program for pre-health professional students.

Proposed Timeline for Recruiting

December 2024 – MTSU Board of Trustees approves degree

Fall 2024 – Work on Marketing Plan and materials in preparation for THEC approval

- Work with Marketing and Graphics to develop web page and print materials including brochures and a recruiting banner
- Work with Marketing and Public Affairs to craft press release
- Develop social media platforms and strategy

January 2025 – THEC Board approves degree

- Announce approval of new degree (press release)
- Launch web site and social media sites
- E-mail to pre-health students at MTSU
- Initial contacts with pre-health offices and organizations at other state institutions (TSU, TTU, APSU, UTC)
- Contact AAMC for inclusion in their database for postbaccalaureate pre-medical programs
- Formally establish the coordinating committee for the program

Spring 2025 – Initiate Visits to internal and external groups for recruiting purposes

- Visits to pre-health offices and organizations at MTSU, TSU, TTU, APSU, and UTC
- Visits to MD, DDS, DO, PA, PT, and Pharmacy programs in Tennessee, including UTHSC, ETSU, Meharry, Vanderbilt, MTSU, Lipscomb, Belmont, Trevecca Nazarene, Bethel College, and South College

April 2025 – Priority registration begins for fall 2025

May 2025 – program begins

Ongoing activities for years 2-5

- Continued marketing and recruitment activities using web site, social media, and visits to area colleges and organizations (including MTSU). As the program grows, the list of colleges to visit will grow to include private colleges/universities in the middle Tennessee area.
- Surveys of graduates to evaluate areas of value and areas for modification and improvement.

Student Support Services

Provide an overview of student support services that will be available to all students in the proposed program (e.g., academic advising, tutoring, internship placement, career counseling, or others).

Supporting students for success is at the core of the proposed program since the student population will be comprised of students who need a bit of help to achieve their goals. Providing student support will be a large part of the program director's activities and is the motivating factor behind requesting an administrative assistant/advisor position. Having time and bandwidth to work individually with each student on areas of strength and areas for development, as well as the construction of realistic plans for applications and how to handle interviews, will be essential for the success of the program. The person who will be filling the administrative assistant position – Mimi Thomas – has a great deal of experience in this area, particularly working with minority and first-generation students as she has been an integral part of our ongoing and active TLSAMP program. Her ability to guide and empathize with the target student population will be very important for their success. Further, her experience with precisely these types of students means that she is quite adept at working with them and helping them to find success. Her

extensive interactions with the Career Development Center here at MTSU will also be of great value in terms of guiding those seeking direct employment as well as offering alternative career pathways to students in the program.

In terms of advising, placement, and career-focused counseling, these are all primary reasons that a seminar course is being proposed for this program. This course will focus on skills for successful applications and interviews, both for professional programs and for the job market. Additionally, it will provide one more opportunity for building a sense of community in the program as well as for the program director to interact with students and gauge their sense of preparation. As part of this seminar, the proposed program will build on the existing mock interview/committee recommendation letter system in place for undergraduate pre-professional students. It will be revised to focus more on the interview itself and additional faculty from the program will be recruited to participate in these sessions. These interviews can also provide additional committee letters for academic reference if needed. For students who are seeking employment in various industry and support positions, we will also coordinate possibilities and contacts with the highly successful M.S. in Professional Science (MSPS) program at MTSU. Since internships are required for that program, they maintain an active list of contacts with area businesses that will prove helpful for our graduates as well. Interview practice and development will be handled both by the same interview committee within the program but will also make use of the extensive and active program found in the Career Development Center at MTSU as well as their more general employment listings.

As previously noted, the main student population targeted for this program are students who are already competitive for health professional school admission but need a little assistance in getting to the admitted category. As a result, test scores required for admission to the program have been set in the range that would generally be acceptable. For students pursuing this program in 12-18 months, they would not have time to be successful in their coursework as well as prepare to retake exams such as the MCAT or DAT. The coursework is like what they would encounter in a health professional program, and success in the proposed MS program will demonstrate likely success in the health professional program. This is the intent and what should lead to improved chances for admission.

For students who do wish to retake standardized tests, they will be advised to complete the program over two years. The coursework itself will help considerably in reviewing and preparing for these tests and these students will also be advised to make use of additional test preparation materials available through our undergraduate Pre-health advising center. Depending on feedback from the students, the program may consider adding a specific test preparation course, although this was not viewed as something important to have as an integral part of the program by the external reviewer.

Further, this program is specifically designed for first generation or disadvantaged students who had a difficult start to college or a difficult transfer from community college to university and now need to demonstrate success in graduate work to compete for admission to health professional programs or for jobs in the biomedical sciences. Improving admissions of these groups will aid in increasing diversity in the professionals in the healthcare workforce over time and possibly improve retention of these workers within the state. The program will attract

students who are interested in many key health professions such as medicine, dentistry, physician assistant and physical therapy. MTSU is particularly well-suited for this program having already existing diverse student populations of first-generation college students, working students, adult learners, underserved students, students from rural areas of Tennessee, and students from historically underrepresented populations. For example, in the past five years, based on data from the MTSU Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research (IEPR) through their Power BI Dashboard, MTSU has had roughly a third of its Biology and Chemistry BS degrees awarded to nonwhite or biracial students, about 40% of these degrees awarded to Pell grant eligible students, 25-30% of these degrees awarded to adult learners, and 30-40% of these degrees awarded to 1st generation college students. Please see the table below for data. It is precisely the experience of our faculty with these populations of students that prompts us to design and deliver this program enhancing these students' competitiveness and their opportunities for career advancement without the costs of a similar program at a private institution. Additionally, there are existing clubs (Minority Association of Pre-medical Students and Black Students in Medicine) at MTSU that will be used to identify and recruit disadvantaged students for this program.

Section X – Instructional and Administrative Resources

Current and Anticipated faculty resources should ensure a program of high quality. The number and qualification of faculty should meet existing institutional standards and should be consistent with external standards.

Current Faculty

Provide a list of current faculty, including primary department, highest degree earned, and describe how they will support the proposed program (time devoted to the program, administrative responsibilities, etc.).

NAME	HIGHEST ACADEMIC DEGREE	RANK	DEPARTMENT	% in PROGRAM
Souvik Banerjee	PhD, University of Southern Mississippi	Assistant Professor	Chemistry	3%
Sarah E. Bergemann	PhD, University of Wyoming	Professor	Biology	5%
Kevin L. Bicker	PhD, University of South Carolina	Associate Professor	Chemistry	3%

NAME	HIGHEST ACADEMIC DEGREE	RANK	DEPARTMENT	% in PROGRAM
Vincent A. Cobb	PhD, Idaho State University	Professor	Biology	5%
Matthew J. Elrod-Erickson	PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Associate Professor	Biology	5%
Anthony L. Farone	PhD, Miami University	Professor	Biology	10%
Mary Bosch Farone	PhD, Miami University	Professor	Biology	5%
Andrienne C. Friedli	PhD, University of Texas, Austin	Professor	Chemistry	3%
Scott T. Handy *	PhD, Indiana University	Professor	Chemistry	50%
Jason R. Jessen	PhD, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University	Professor	Biology	5%
Amy E. Jetton	PhD, Northwestern University	Associate Professor	Biology	10%
Paul Kline	PhD, University of Notre Dame	Professor	Chemistry	10%
Justin M. Miller	PhD, University of Alabama, Birmingham	Assistant Professor	Chemistry	10%
David E. Nelson	PhD, University of Liverpool	Associate Professor	Biology	10%
Beng Guat Ooi	PhD,	Professor	Chemistry	5%

NAME	HIGHEST ACADEMIC DEGREE	RANK	DEPARTMENT	% in PROGRAM
	Monash University			
Kiel G. Ormerod	PhD, Brock University	Assistant Professor	Biology	5%
J. Brian Robertson	PhD, Vanderbilt University	Associate Professor	Biology	5%
Rebecca Lyn Seipelt-Thiemann	PhD, University of Kentucky	Professor	Biology	5%
William C. Stewart	PhD, East Carolina University	Professor	Biology	5%
April M. Weissmiller	PhD, University of California, San Diego	Assistant Professor	Biology	5%

* = program director

Presents – 10% teaches a class each year, 5% teaches a class every other year, 3% teaches a class every third year, 50% for program director

Anticipated Faculty

Describe the additional faculty needed during the next five years for the initiation of the program and list the anticipated schedule for addition of these faculty members.

No new faculty will be required at this time. Given that some courses may need to be offered more frequently once the program is established and a new course dedicated to this program is included, we did include money in the budget to cover the cost of adjunct faculty to allow for the additional instructional needs of the associated departments.

Non-instructional Staff

Provide a list of anticipated non-instructional staff positions required along with a narrative of how these positions will support the new program.

This program is projected to require a half-time administrative assistant to assist in advising, keeping track of student placement and outcomes, recruiting, budgetary paperwork, other. Assistance in advising, recruitment, and tracking student placement are key elements of this support as it is fully anticipated that the students in this program will need considerable

assistance and guidance to be more successful in future applications. Further, we have noted that tracking student placement and progression at the undergraduate level is challenging and so the other half of this position would be devoted to better tracking and better out-reach regarding features that are strengths and weaknesses of existing and the proposed program.

Section XI - Resources

Equipment

Assess the adequacy of the existing equipment available for the proposed academic program. Include physical equipment, computer facilities, special classrooms, etc.

Since this program is built almost entirely on existing coursework, the facilities available for teaching the relevant Biology and Chemistry courses, including the laboratories, are completely adequate. There is currently space and instrumentation available for the projected increase in enrollment.

Information Technology

Describe current information technology resources available to support the program.

All classrooms and laboratories in the Science building are fully equipped as master classrooms with projection, computer, and recording capabilities, so no additional technology will be required. As with all MTSU programs, there is access to additional resources such as cloud computing and network resources supported by the Institutional Technology Division.

Library resources

Provide an overview of the current library resources available to support the proposed program. This might include a summary or listing of the appropriate monographs, serials, databases, and online resources that are held by the campus of college libraries to support the proposed program.

The James Walker library already features a wide array of journals, monographs, and database resources for the Biology, Chemistry, and health-related fields (including supporting the recently approved Physicians Assistant program). No additional library resources will be needed.

Facilities

Describe facilities that will support the proposed program. For existing space and facilities, briefly describe the type(s) of space and facilities (e.g., a listing of the number and types of classrooms or labs, student offices or spaces, etc.).

The Departments of Chemistry and Biology are housed in the Science building constructed in 2014, which is 257,000 sq ft and features 36 laboratories and 6 classrooms as well as 2 conference rooms and faculty offices for all of the Chemistry and Biology faculty involved in this program. All existing courses are currently taught in this facility and the classroom and conference room space will enable the new course as well as formal and informal student and student faculty meetings.

Other resources

Describe other support resources available to support the program.

No additional resources are projected.

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Letter of Notification Evaluation
May 30, 2024



The evaluation of the Letter of Notification (LON) is in accordance with the THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process. The evaluation is conducted by interested parties and THEC staff. The LON is posted on the THEC website for a 15-day period of comment by interested parties. Based on the internal and external evaluation, THEC will make a determination to support, not to support, or defer a decision based on a revised LON.

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University	NAPP Submission Date: May 14, 2024
Academic Program, Degree Designation: Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science (MS)	
Concentration(s):	
Proposed CIP Code and Title: 26.0102 (Biomedical Sciences, General)	
Proposed Implementation Date: May 2025	
External Reviewer: * TENTATIVE *	
Dr. John G. Bailey (link to faculty page) Associate Teaching Professor of Biological Sciences and Coordinator of the Biomedical Sciences, MS University of Southern Mississippi John.G.Bailey@usm.edu 601-266-4375	
Academic Program Liaison(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amy Aldridge Sanford, PhD, Vice Provost for Academic Programs, amy.aldridge.sanford@mtsu.edu 	
New Academic Program Approval Process: Essential Steps	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site Visit: <i>July 2024</i> 2. External reviewer submit report to MTSU and THEC (30 days after site visit): <i>August 2024</i> 3. MTSU submits response to THEC based on external reviewer's recommendations (30 days upon receipt of External Reviewer report): <i>September 2024</i> 4. THEC makes determination of whether to support, not support or defer support of proposed program: <i>TBD</i> 5. If THEC supports the institution's response, MTSU may seek approval from the Board of Trustees: <i>December 2024</i> 6. MTSU provides documentation of BOT approval and request program to be placed on Commission agenda: <i>January 2025 or May 2025</i> 	

Note: *Italics reflect concerns based on the NAPP Evaluation conducted by THEC staff.*

Letter of support from President/Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter of support dated January 11, 2024, sent from MTSU President McPhee was included.
Section II: Background	
Background on academic program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposed MS in Biomedical Sciences would directly support workforce development in many of the areas of healthcare including pharmaceutical research and sales, clinical research and

	<p>clinical trial coordinators, biomedical and biotechnology research, and forensic science testing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program can support diagnostic positions by focusing electives on lab and technique-based courses. ▪ The proposed program has both direct workforce development, as well as the indirect workforce development of helping underserved students gain admission to pre-health professional programs by improving the competitiveness of their applications.
<p>Purpose and nature of academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program is a 30-credit hour fully on-ground program, with the objective for students to complete in 10 months. ▪ The curriculum will consist of a 16-credit core of foundational courses with opportunities for electives (14 credit hours) based on the student's intended career path. ▪ The proposed program would be the only public option in the state of Tennessee for a nonthesis MS degree in Biomedical Sciences aimed to prepare students either for professional school or direct entry into the workforce. Existing programs in the state are focused on research. ▪ The proposed MS would help pre-professional students increase their competitiveness for medical, dental, or pharmaceutical schools, or physician assistant programs by offering a bridge of coursework from undergraduate to medical school.
<p>Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program aligns with the State Master by acknowledging a critical need for distinctive graduate and professional level programs by providing graduates with the groundwork needed to enter the healthcare industry and accommodate the expected 12 percent population growth in the state, as well as the 25 percent population growth in the greater Nashville area by ensuring adequate healthcare practitioners are available to serve the population. ▪ The Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency has authorized expansion of area hospitals increasing available beds across the state requiring training and recruiting of healthcare professionals and associated support personnel in the area. ▪ The proposed Biomedical Sciences, MS program will help to address the growing need for healthcare workers by preparing Tennessee graduates for acceptance into medical, dental, pharmacy, and other professional schools as well as preparing diagnostic and pharmaceutical support personnel. ▪ The proposed program also aligns with the State Master Plan by minimizing redundancy in degree offerings by being the only public institution offering this type of degree in Middle Tennessee and is well situated to meet the needs of historically underserved student populations, who sometimes have difficult starts in higher education and therefore are less competitive on paper during the graduate application process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program aligns with the institutional master plan by advancing “academic quality through excellence in teaching.” The proposed program also aligns with two of the three listed Strategic Directions, by creating and supporting an interdisciplinary graduate program designed to provide breadth of knowledge . 																								
<p>Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This proposed program will consist primarily of existing courses within the College of Basic and Applied Sciences and will only require minimal additional resources. ▪ The college currently has 75 full-time faculty in the departments of Chemistry and Biology available to support and teach in the proposed MS program. ▪ The proposed program is unlikely to negatively impact enrollments in existing thesis-based M.S. programs at other institutions or the existing MSPS offered by the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, which has a business focused. 																								
<p>Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently two public institutions offer degrees with similar names and/or CIP codes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ETSU has a Biomedical concentration within their MS in Biology. ○ UTHSC offers an MS in Biomedical Science with a concentration in laboratory research and management. ▪ Currently five private institutions offer degrees with similar names and/or CIP codes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meharry Medical College ○ Lincoln Memorial ○ Lipscomb University ○ Union University ○ Vanderbilt University <table border="1" data-bbox="565 1222 1455 1843"> <thead> <tr> <th>CIP Code</th> <th>College/ University</th> <th>Program</th> <th>2022-2021</th> <th>2021-2020</th> <th>2020-2019</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>26.0101</td> <td>East Tennessee State University</td> <td>MS in Biology</td> <td>17</td> <td>12</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26.0101</td> <td>University of Tennessee Health Science Center</td> <td>MS in Biomedical Science</td> <td>3</td> <td>7</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>51.0000</td> <td>Meharry Medical College</td> <td>MS in Health Sciences</td> <td>122</td> <td>86</td> <td>46</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	CIP Code	College/ University	Program	2022-2021	2021-2020	2020-2019	26.0101	East Tennessee State University	MS in Biology	17	12	11	26.0101	University of Tennessee Health Science Center	MS in Biomedical Science	3	7	1	51.0000	Meharry Medical College	MS in Health Sciences	122	86	46
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	26.99 99; 26.04 03; 01.81 01	Lincoln Memorial University	MS in Biomedical Sciences, Anatomical Sciences, and Veterinary Biomedical Sciences	60	97	85
		Lipscomb University	MS in Biomolecular Sciences	33	33	24
	26.01 01	Vanderbilt University	MS in Biomedical Science	42	38	33
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed program does not have a special accrediting body. The only notifications that will be required will be the standard reporting of new programs to SACSCOC. 					
Administrative Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MS in Biomedical Science will be an interdisciplinary program including faculty from the Departments of Biology and Chemistry in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences. Faculty will remain part of their home departments while teaching courses in this program. There will be a program director and an administrative assistant/advisor, with the program director reporting to the chair of the Department of Chemistry. 					
Section III: Feasibility Study						
Student interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A survey of current MTSU students in upper division biology and chemistry courses was taken in spring of 2022 to explore the level of interest in this program. Of the 339 students that were surveyed, 266 of those students plan to go to a health professional school. Of the respondents, 59 percent said that they were very or somewhat likely to “enroll in a one-year, nonthesis master’s degree program at MTSU that is specifically designed to increase your qualifications for professional school.” Student interest in programs like the one proposed has also increased, with the number of degrees awarded tripling between 2011 and 2018. 					
Local and Regional Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupational projections through 2028 indicate there will be over 30,000 healthcare practitioner and technical opportunities in Tennessee. According to the Nashville Health Sector Research Report, Nashville is home to more than 500 health care companies; data indicate that “121,027 persons employed in the Nashville MSA” (p. 15) are in direct health care services. The report indicates that an 					

	<p>additional 67,000 jobs are anticipated from 2018-2023 due to new jobs and retirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 2018 report by the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development indicated that ambulatory healthcare services (outpatient healthcare) and hospitals are key industries in the state and specifically in Middle Tennessee. Both ambulatory healthcare services and hospitals are included in the top 5 industries in the state, with the healthcare and social assistance industry employment growing 8 percent between 2013 to 2018. ▪ The Tennessee Departments of Labor & Workforce Development's report, "The Demand for STEM Occupations in Tennessee" lists medical scientists as an occupation expected to grow 22 percent within the state between 2016-2026. ▪ A search of Indeed and CareerBuilder in March 2024 demonstrated significant demand in areas served by the proposed program. For example, the search yielded 143 positions in biomedical research, while there were 1,956 ads for clinical testing. ▪ Beyond the growth in demand for careers serviced by the proposed degrees, demand for professional health programs graduates continues to grow.
Employer Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report ranks healthcare as one of the six occupational groups in high demand. ▪ The Nashville metropolitan area, including Davidson, Rutherford, and Williamson counties, is the fastest growing metropolitan region in Tennessee with a growth rate of 15.56 percent for 2010-2018 which corresponds to a growth in healthcare needs. ▪ There has also been a recent increase in hospital beds across Rutherford County with an anticipated increase in Davidson County to follow. ▪ The AAMC Tennessee Physician Workforce Profile shows that a third of practicing physicians in the state are over the age of 60. Which increases the need for new physicians soon. ▪ The AAMC workforce report for 2019 indicates that 66.7% of the physicians practicing in Tennessee completed either undergraduate or graduate medical education in Tennessee. Thus, a post-baccalaureate pre-medical program at a public university in Tennessee will aid in retaining more physicians in Tennessee. • Graduates of the proposed program will be qualified to work in pharmaceutical sales, clinical research or clinical trial coordination, medical testing, and forensic sciences. Hundreds of unfilled jobs in these areas are advertised by employers on job sites, such as Indeed.com, ziprecruiter.com, and Glassdoor.com.
Community and Industry Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters of support were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Quillen College of Medicine at ETSU ○ The Physician Assistant Program at MTSU ○ The Vanderbilt School of Medicine

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aegis Sciences Corporation ○ Volunteer Botanicals ○ Life Sciences Tennessee
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Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Projected Enrollment and Graduates

- Projected attrition is based on the 80-90 percent graduation rates observed in the MS programs in Chemistry and Biology and the MS in Professional Science programs at MTSU.

Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1	2025-2026	15	2	9
2	2026-2027	17	3	14
3	2027-2028	18	3	14
4	2028-2029	20	3	15
5	2029-2030	22	4	16

Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver Proposed Program

Faculty

- Beginning in Year 1, support for up to four adjuncts to cover up to 32 workload units per year are being budgeted. The cost (\$800 per workload unit) is based upon the standard adjunct pay rate at MTSU.
- A summer stipend (\$5,000) for the program coordinator is budgeted based on the standard rate for graduate program coordinators at MTSU. The total annual cost is \$25,600.
- An existing faculty member will assume responsibilities for the Graduate Program Director role, and total annual cost will be \$14,600.
- ***Please ensure that cost of living adjustment costs and benefits are included as part of the cost calculation, when applicable.***

Non-Instructional Staff

- The annual cost (including benefits) of half-time effort to Academic Affairs will be around \$40,000. The cost share will begin on 09/01/2024.
- ***Please ensure that benefits and cost of living adjustments are included as part of total costs, if applicable.***

Graduate Assistants

- No new graduate assistants will be needed for this program. At present, there are no expectations of any incremental graduate assistant resources.

Accreditation

- There is no professional accrediting organization for this program and SACSCOC notification will be handled through the existing coordinator at MTSU, so no expense is anticipated.

Consultants

- As part of the THEC approval process, the program will require an external reviewer in the planning year, with a one-time cost estimated at \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend and travel costs.

Equipment

- No equipment costs are required to develop or run this program.

Information Technology

- There are no new information technology costs associated with this program.

Library Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No new library acquisitions will be required.
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The initial cost for marketing is \$2,000, and a smaller annual amount of \$500 will be for restocking of consumable items.
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No new facilities will be required for this program.
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funds for either the coordinator and/or the staff position to visit area colleges for recruiting purposes are budgeted at \$2,000 annually.
Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Miscellaneous expenses associated with operating the proposed program, such as office supplies, and postage are included in this budget item valued at \$2,000 annually.
Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program	
Tuition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is assumed that the proposed program will be a mix of one-year (taking 15 credit hours per term) and two-year students (taking 7-8 credit hours per term), with the majority opting for the faster completion allowed by the 10-month (two-term) option. This works out to an average of 25 credit hours (over two terms) per student. ▪ The cost for 12 credit hours in one semester is \$6,372 and the cost for 13 credit hours in the other semester is \$6,476, for a total student tuition and fee cost in one-year of \$12,848.
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No grants are anticipated to fund this program.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No other revenue is anticipated at this time.
Section VII: Implementation Timeline	
Implementation Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation timeline for the proposed program that includes the following key dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accreditation considerations and timeline for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC): NA ○ Accreditation considerations and timeline for professional disciplinary accreditation organizations: NA ○ Proposed dates for the external review site visit: July 2024 ○ Estimated date of submission of the external review report to THEC and the institution (within 30 days after the site visit): August 2024 ○ Estimated date of institution’s response to external review: September 2024 ○ Proposed date of institutional governing board’s meeting to consider the proposed program: December 2024 ○ Proposed date of the THEC meeting for the academic program to be considered for Commission approval: January 2025 ○ Proposed implementation date when students will enroll in the proposed academic program: May 2025
Section VIII: Curriculum	
Program-Specific Goals/Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Program outcomes for the proposed Biomedical Sciences, MS include the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have a deep understanding of physiology, biochemistry, and cell and molecular biology, preparing them for application to healthcare professional schools/programs, PhD programs, positions in biomedical research laboratories, employment in clinical research, and/or pharmaceutical or biotechnology careers. ○ Be prepared to improve their performance on professional school exams if needed. ○ Learn how to find and read biomedical literature, how to distinguish different types of studies in the biomedical literature, and how to evaluate the relative strength of published literature in the biomedical sciences. ○ Better understand professional school application processes and expectations, jobs in the biomedical field open to those with an M.S. in Biomedical Sciences, and interviewing skills.
Student Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At the completion of the proposed program, students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand and explain the cellular and physiological processes occurring in the human body. ○ Recognize and explain the anatomy and function of the human body and how abnormal functioning is related to disease. ○ Understand the chemical processes occurring within the human body and be able to explain how they underlie and enable observed biological processes. ○ Explain the fundamentals of research design and analysis and use this knowledge to select appropriate methods for a given research situation. ○ Develop and refine interviewing skills and a deeper understanding of the health field and health-related professional programs.
Academic Program Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program is a 30-credit, non-thesis program with a 16-credit core and 14 credits of electives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All students will complete four Biology courses, including a one-credit-hour seminar, and two Biochemistry courses. ○ Students will be able to select electives from a list of biology and Chemistry courses. ○ The seminar course will include coaching and mentoring through the application and interview process for health professional programs and/or jobs, and will enhance familiarity with human, translational and clinical research, as well as jobs in the biomedical field.
Existing and New Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All but two courses required for the curriculum are existing, except BIOL 6315, Mammalian Physiology, and BMS 6500, Seminar, which are currently going through campus approvals. <i>Should the BMS course have a four-letter prefix?</i>

Program of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sample programs of study are provided for one-year and multi-year completion.
Assessment and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment will be conducted on an ongoing basis by the Biomedical Sciences director and a faculty advisory board, including at least one faculty member from the Department of Biology and one from the Department of Chemistry. ▪ A detailed schedule for assessment and evaluation is provided on pg. 29 of the NAPP.
Articulation and Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NA
Section IX: Students	
Academic Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students should have earned a Bachelor's degree from an accredited university that includes the equivalent of a Biology minor with a course in Genetics and a course in Microbiology, and an 8-credit-hour sequence in General Chemistry and an 8-hour sequence in Organic Chemistry. ▪ This should be combined with one of the following exam scores and GPA combinations (4.0 scale) that would be consistent with specific professional aspirations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores of 124/section and 504 total minimum combined with GPA requirements of 3.2 overall and science GPAs (inclusive of repeated grades) or 3.5 overall and Science GPAs in the last 45 hours; ○ Dental Admission Test (DAT) scores of 18/section minimum combined with GPA of 3.0 overall and science GPAs (inclusive of repeated grades) or 3.3 overall and science GPAs in the last 45 hours; ○ Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT) scores of 400/section minimum combined with GPA of 3.0 overall and science GPAs (inclusive of repeated grades) or 3.3 overall GPA and Science GPAs in the last 45 hours; ○ GRE score of 302 combined and 150/section minimum combined with a GPA of 3.2 overall and science or 3.4 overall and science in the last 45 hrs. (used for physician assistant program and physical therapy program admissions) ○ Considering two separate GPAs allows for students who had a difficult start in college to demonstrate growth over time. ○ Since the proposed program is intended to be completed in 10-18 months, students should have completed at least one attempt at an entrance exam prior to enrolling. ▪ Completion of the proposed program does not guarantee admission to professional programs, but it could make students more competitive for admissions, particularly first generation and disadvantaged students. <i>Could you please elaborate on how the program's design will ensure representation and retention for these students?</i>

Marketing and Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing will be conducted through social media and other web formats, print materials, as well as through contacts and promotion with area and regional medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and physician assistant training programs and pre-health professional clubs. MTSU also plans to collaborate with advising staff at other regional universities to encourage enrollment. A timeline for recruiting is included as part of the submission and is on pages 31-2.
Student Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enrolled in proposed Biomedical Sciences, MS will have access to all support resources offered by MTSU, the College of Graduate Studies, and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences. Students will receive additional career and professional school mentoring in the seminar course, and through the program director. <i>Since the intended student population is those students interested in professional school, what supports and tutoring will be available to students for improving test scores, when applicable?</i>
Section X: Instructional and Administrative Resources	
Faculty Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing faculty resources will be sufficient.
Current Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twenty tenured and tenure-track faculty will serve the proposed program. All teach in the Departments of Biology and Chemistry, and will serve the program on a rotating basis. Dr. Scott Handy will serve as the program director.
Anticipated New Faculty and Instructional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjunct faculty may be hired to support added instructional needs of the departments as the program grows.
Non-Instructional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed program will utilize a half-time administrative assistant to help with advising, recruitment, and student placement.
Section XI: Resources	
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing laboratory equipment and space are adequate and will be sufficient for expanded enrollment as well.
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional IT resources are requested, as existing IT supports are sufficient.
Library Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The James Walker Library has the necessary resources available for the proposed program, including a wide array of journals, monographs, and database resources.
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Departments of Chemistry and Biology are housed in the Science building constructed in 2014 which features 257,000 square feet of laboratories (36 in total), 6 classrooms, 2 conference rooms, and faculty offices. All existing courses are taught in this space, and no additional renovations or space will be necessary.
Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
Appendices	
Letters of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters of support for the proposed program were received from:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kara M. Allen KasaKaitas, Director, American Chemical Society ○ Glenn Perdue and Abby Totter, Chairman and Executive Director, Life Science Tennessee ○ Marie Patterson, MTSU Physician Assistant Studies Program Director, MTSU ○ Stephanie Cole, Admissions Counselor, Quillen College of Medicine (ETSU) ○ Robert Carnahan, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Radiology and Associate Director of the Vanderbilt Vaccine Center, Vanderbilt University ○ Thomas Woodward, Lead Scientist, Volunteer Botanicals
Updated THEC Financial Projections Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial Projections Form provided in Appendix C of the LON. ▪ An updated financial projections form is provided as part of the submission. All figures reflect descriptions in the narrative.
Faculty CVs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculty CVs are included as Appendix C.
Course Syllabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course syllabi are included as Appendix D.
Other Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feasibility Study conducted by Dr. Steven G. Livingston of the Jones College of Business's Business and Economic Research Center. ▪ LON Evaluation completed by THEC staff, which includes a letter from APSU's Provost, Dr. Maria Cronley. ▪ Course syllabi are included as part of the submission. <i>The curriculum lists BMS as the seminar course, but the course is listed as BMS 6000 in the syllabus. Could you please clarify the correct numbering and ensure it's consistent across both parts of the NAPP?</i>
Public Comment	
Public Comments Received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public comment was received from Maria Cronley, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, APSU. Attached in Appendix A. ▪ MTSU contends that the curricular comparison between the MS in Biology at APSU and the curriculum for the proposed MS in Biomedical Sciences are not duplicative.

Appendix A:

Dear Dr. Roberts,

Austin Peay State University (APSU) objects to the proposed [M.S. in Biomedical Science degree at Middle State University \(MTSU\)](#). The proposed program appears to be duplicative of a subpart of APSU's [M.S. in Biology degree](#). APSU appreciates the continuous efforts to innovate and expand academic offerings, however; this proposal appears to be a disguised replication of an existing degree program under a different name.

APSU's objection is predicated on two factors: 1) an unnecessary duplication of degrees by way of a nomenclature change and 2) a lack of a clear proposed curriculum to justify MTSU's proposed M.S. in Biomedical Science degree. APSU is concerned by the precedent that MTSU's proposed degree would establish through the misrepresentation of an existing degrees' merits simply by changing its name. Typically, M.S. Biology degrees include coursework that satisfies pre-professional healthcare academic pathways to professional healthcare graduate programs (APSU's [list of all APSU's M.S. Biology courses](#) where 40% of the courses could be considered "biomedical") at Tennessee's two leading public medical schools at [ETSU](#) and [UTHSC](#).

The lack of any described curriculum within MTSU's Letter of Notification (LON) makes it difficult to discern. As such, the true academic merits of MTSU's proposal cannot be determined. The LON for [MTSU's proposed M.S. Biomedical Science degree states](#), "The 30-credit hour curriculum will consist of a 16-credit hour core of foundational courses (physiology, biochemistry, and cell and molecular biology) with opportunities for electives based on the individual student's career plan." MTSU suggests that the proposed degree is intended for students improving their knowledge and potential to gain admission into a healthcare professional degree programs, like medical school. The proposal's lack of a described curriculum does not provide MTSU with a defensible position as stewards of public funds. It appears that MTSU is merely repackaging existing courses from other degree programs and begs questions regarding the integrity and validity of the proposal. Of note, the letters of support are lacking from [UTHSC which is one of two public medical schools for Tennesseans](#). Vanderbilt University's Medical School [tends to accept a small number of Tennesseans for medical school](#). As such, Vanderbilt University's Medical School should not be a consideration for MTSU's proposed graduate degree. Also of note, [Vanderbilt University's data doesn't list any MTSU graduates gaining acceptance to Vanderbilt University's Medical School since 2019](#).

The inability to review MTSU's proposed curriculum for the M.S. in Biomedical Science is challenging to provide an accurate assessment, but it appears that the core content aligns closely to APSU's established M.S. in Biology. Additionally, similar concerns could be asserted by other Biology and Biochemistry graduate degree programs offered in TN including the existing [M.S. in Biology at MTSU](#). This apparent duplication raises questions about the necessity and academic integrity of introducing a program that, on the surface, seems to differ only in nomenclature.

APSU takes pride in the rigorous standards and unique features of APSU's [M.S. in Biology \(list of all APSU's M.S. Biology courses](#) where 40% of the courses could be considered "biomedical") and the distinctiveness of all APSU's degrees. Any attempt to imitate or replicate these degrees with varying naming conventions undermines the distinctiveness and credibility of APSU's academic programs. Such actions may introduce confusion among prospective students who may struggle to distinguish the genuine differences between the two programs including the Biology program at MTSU (i.e., [M.S. in Biology](#) and [M.S. in Professional Science](#)).

APSU respectfully requests that MTSU reconsiders the proposed program in light of its striking similarities to APSU's established M.S. in Biology and other public universities' graduate-level Biology programs. APSU recommends that MTSU consider adding an academic concentration within MTSU's existing M.S. in Biology for a pre-professional healthcare track.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and welcome the opportunity to further engage constructive dialogue to address these objections and concerns collaboratively. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maria L. Cronley, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs
Austin Peay State University

**EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT FOR THE TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION/
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY – PROPOSED MS DEGREE IN BIOMEDICAL
SCIENCES**

John G. Bailey, Ph.D.

Associate Teaching Professor of Biological Sciences

Coordinator of the MS in Biomedical Sciences Program

University of Southern Mississippi

John.g.bailey@usm.edu

601-266-4375

9/2/24

My report is based on the New Academic Program Proposal (NAPP) for the M.S. degree in Biomedical Sciences provided by Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Letter of Notification Evaluation, the THEC Review Questions for External Reviewers, the Tennessee State Master Plan for Higher Education (available online), and my virtual meetings with MTSU administrators, faculty and staff, and external community partners and collaborators, as well as THEC staff, on July 30 and 31, 2024. I appreciate the opportunity to provide my assessment of this proposed degree program. My general impressions/thoughts on the proposal are below, followed by my specific answers to the 15 questions provided by the THEC.

In my professional opinion, the NAPP for this new M.S. degree program was well written. I also believe the justification provided for the program provided by the NAPP is very strong. Given the demographics of the region served by Middle Tennessee State University, I believe an M.S. in Biomedical Sciences degree program has the potential to help many students in the transition from their undergraduate years to careers in healthcare and biomedical research. The nationwide shortage of physicians and other healthcare professionals has been well documented for many years. In addition, there is an expanding need for individuals with graduate level education/training in the biomedical sciences to work in biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and medical diagnostics development. Based on the NAPP and the THEC Letter of Notification Evaluation, as well as my own research, I believe this is particularly true of the Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro Combined Statistical area, which is served by MTSU. During our virtual meetings, I was very interested to hear from external community MTSU partners and collaborators in these industries about the number of MTSU graduates they had hired over the last several years. I believe this certainly demonstrates an important area of positive potential for the proposed M.S. in Biomedical Sciences at MTSU.

The well-documented nationwide deficit of physicians is a particular problem for the nation's healthcare system. Based on my experience in pre-medical and medical education, having advised pre-medical students for many years, and having served on the founding faculty at a new medical school in an underserved region, I believe the aspect of the NAPP related to helping students become more competitive applicants for medical

school is, by itself, a very strong justification for this proposed degree. There are currently 200 medical schools in the United States (159 M.D. and 41 D.O.). The number of medical schools has grown in recent years through attempts to meet the nation's needs. The Thomas F. Frist, Jr. College of Medicine at Belmont University (not far from the campus of MTSU) has just admitted its inaugural class of 50 students. The Lincoln Memorial DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine (LMU DCOM) – Harrogate campus, (established in 2007) now has an entering class size of 243 while the LMU DCOM - Knoxville campus (established in 2019) currently has a class size of 216. This represents an addition of over 500 total new seats for medical students in the state of Tennessee within the last several years, over and beyond those seats that have been available at the more established medical schools in the state (the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, East Tennessee State, Vanderbilt, and Meharry). I should add that another new osteopathic school, run by the Baptist Hospital system, has recently been established in Memphis. One of the May 2024 graduates of our M.S. in Biomedical Sciences program here at Southern Miss was accepted there in May. I do not yet know the class size at this new institution.

These new medical schools will need more qualified applicants. Experienced admissions officers and admissions committee members know that applicants who are well prepared for medical school have a higher probability of successful matriculation and passing the two rounds of national board exams while in medical school and succeeding in residency programs. I was interested to hear in our virtual meetings from an LMU DCOM admissions representative that approximately 35% of accepted students at that institution have a master's degree. This is just one of several key areas in which a new M.S. in Biomedical Sciences program at a public institution in the region, like MTSU, can have a very important role in supporting the nation's healthcare system.

A master's level program can also serve to enhance the academic preparation of students for professional schools in other healthcare professions, including dentistry, pharmacy, optometry, physical therapy and physician assistant (PA) schools. I was interested to learn, during our virtual meetings related to the proposal, that Tennessee has a significant number of PA schools (15). However, this is not surprising given a total state population of approximately seven million, the nationwide shortage of physicians, and the common need for basic healthcare within any general population. Mississippi, by comparison, is behind, with only two PA schools. A third is currently under development, here at Southern Miss. This is in a state with a population of just under three million and an extreme shortage of physicians. Mississippi is one of the most underserved states in the country with respect to the number of healthcare professionals. Hopefully, due to more resources and better planning, Tennessee will be in a better position to avoid a situation for its citizens that is as difficult as the one here.

In addition to contributing to human healthcare needs, I believe an M.S. degree program in Biomedical Sciences at MTSU has the potential to contribute significantly to animal health in the region. Of course, animal health and its relationship to food safety and the overall control of zoonotic disease has important implications for human health. I served as a

basic science faculty member at Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine (MSUCVM) for eleven years. Through my work at MSUCVM, I became more aware of details related to the University of Tennessee's College of Veterinary Medicine (UTCVM). The current class size of approximately 85 students at UTCVM, is similar to the class size at MSUCVM.

Given that MTSU has a Department of Animal Science, with many of the undergraduate students in the discipline likely interested in going to veterinary school, an M.S. in Biomedical Sciences degree may help those students become more competitive. Admission to veterinary school, much like medical school, is highly competitive. Currently, there are only 33 veterinary schools in the United States. However, there is a well-documented nationwide shortage of veterinarians, particularly in rural areas where there are important needs with respect to the health of livestock, some of which are an important part of the nation's food supply. It is therefore hard to overemphasize the long-term implications that this shortage of veterinarians may have for public health across the country.

My answers to the specific questions provided by the THEC:

1. Does the proposed program appear to align with its stated goals of the state master plan and the institutional mission?

After examining the Tennessee Master Plan for Higher Education (available online) as well as the MTSU mission statement, I would have to say yes.

2. Is the proposed curriculum for the program sufficiently extensive and sophisticated for a program in this field at this level of offering?

Based on my experience in coordinating two different M.S. in Biomedical Sciences degree programs (one at the William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine and one at the University of Southern Mississippi), yes.

If it is, what are its strengths?

After carefully examining the NAPP's description of the 30-credit hour curriculum, including the 16-credit hour program core and the 14-credit hours of electives, course descriptions, and course syllabi, I believe the curricular design is a strong one that should enhance the preparation of students significantly beyond that of most undergraduate curricula related to the biomedical sciences. I also believe the proposed curriculum will easily meet SACSCOC requirements for graduate programs in this regard.

3. Are admissions standards appropriate?

After examining the admissions standards as described in the NAPP, as I stated in our virtual meetings, I believe they should be revised so that they are the same for all applicants, regardless of career aspirations. Although I understand the rationale given to have undergraduate GPA requirements tailored to career aspirations and the relative competitiveness of various professional school programs, I believe the overriding concern here should be for the MTSU faculty and staff involved in admissions to have the ability and confidence to assure all applicants they were treated fairly and consistently with respect to consideration of their undergraduate GPAs in the admissions process.

Also, in my experience, some students may change their career aspirations once they have entered the program. As an example of this, recall my account of one of our Southern Miss M.S. in Biomedical Sciences students changing her mind and deciding not to pursue medical school, surprisingly, after obtaining a medical school interview. Through shadowing experiences, she had become very interested in cardiovascular perfusion as well as the lifestyle it would permit compared to practicing medicine. She was one of the first graduates of our M.S. in Biomedical Sciences at USM. Today, she is a perfusionist and seems very content with her career decision.

With respect to other aspects of the admissions standards as described in the NAPP, the total MCAT score of 504 seems a little high to me if used as an admissions criterion for an M.S. program. Accepted applicants at osteopathic medical schools across the south have often had total MCAT scores of 500 – 502 in recent years. The most recent typical total score of applicants accepted at Meharry College of Medicine that I have seen is 504. My suggestion here is to look at the latest percentile rankings of total scores on the MCAT as compiled by the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC). In my opinion, selecting a minimum total score on the MCAT for admission to an M.S. program should be more oriented toward potential improvement. Perhaps a score between the 45th and 51st percentile would be appropriate for your region. However, perhaps an admissions committee could decide that after consultation with regional medical schools.

Also, the Pharmacy School Admissions Test (PCAT) is no longer required to apply to most pharmacy schools in the U.S. and will not be administered past the 2024-2025 Admissions Cycle. A suggestion here, would be to consider GRE scores for students interested in pursuing admission to pharmacy school.

I believe the reasoning for considering a separate GPA in the last 45 hours for students that had a difficult start in college, as described in the NAPP, is very good. In my experience, some students show a vast improvement in academic performance during or after the first two years of undergraduate work.

4. Are degree requirements sufficiently specific to ensure that the proposed program will meet stated objectives?

Yes, based on the course descriptions and syllabi.

5. Are the level and quality of the faculty adequate to ensure that the proposed program will meet its stipulated objectives?

Based on the course syllabi with respect to the descriptions of professional preparation and the faculty biographies available online, yes.

6. There are other programs in this field available in the United States and in Tennessee. As presently proposed, is this program appropriately distinctive to attract students from in-state and from out-of-state as well?

From what I have seen, the other M.S. programs in Tennessee are not exactly the same, at least not currently. In my opinion, the NAPP addresses issues of possible duplication within Tennessee very well. Currently, there does not appear to be any significant duplication with this proposed program.

Moreover, based on what I wrote earlier in this report in the opening paragraphs, I believe the need for enhanced preparation of medical students, other students in healthcare related professional schools, and individuals preparing to work in biomedical/STEM related fields, far outweighs any concerns over possible duplication with other M.S. programs which may develop in the future in the state, whether at public or private institutions.

I believe this proposed program will have no problems attracting applicants, due to the nature of the program and the future endeavors for which it will be preparing students. Making current undergraduate students in currently enrolled in related undergraduate degree programs at MTSU aware of the program through academic advisement, posted hard copy announcements and through email and social media, communication with academic advisors at other institutions (as described in the NAPP) as well as posting a basic description of the program, curriculum, etc. under its academic home on the MTSU website will most likely attract plenty of interest.

7. Are the projected number of enrollments in and graduates from the program reasonable?

Yes, based on what I have read on this in the NAPP.

8. If the proposed program is to be offered via distance learning ...

This question does not appear to be applicable.

9. Based on the supporting documentation provided and your knowledge of the field, is the level of national demand for graduates of such programs sufficient to ensure employment?

In my opinion, *ensuring* employment related to any degree program is a tall order and may be unrealistic. However, some of the graduates of our M.S. in Biomedical Sciences at Southern Miss that have not gone on to professional school or a Ph.D. program have gotten jobs in genetic testing and medical diagnostics in communities like Houston, Texas and Madison Wisconsin. Hopefully, this provides some indication of the prospects for future employment. Given the demographics of the area in which MTSU is located, the local employment opportunities may be far greater for your students than they are for ours here in Mississippi.

10. Based on your review, does the curriculum provide sufficient opportunity for graduates to demonstrate both knowledge and skills needed for successful employment?

Yes, based on the course descriptions and syllabi of both required and elective courses in the NAPP.

11. Are the support services (e.g., advisement, financial aid advertisement, available technology, library, etc.) adequate for the proposed program?

Yes, based on the descriptions of these resources in the NAPP and from my virtual meetings with MTSU faculty and staff.

12. Are the facilities (e.g. physical space, equipment, etc.) adequate for proposed program?

Yes, based on the description of these items in the NAPP.

13. Are the projected budgets adequate to support the proposed program and sustain development during the initial years to maturity (7 years)?

Yes, based on the description/explanation provided in the NAPP.

14. Based on your best professional judgement, is the proposed program needed?

Yes, very much so. Please see the opening paragraphs of my report.

If so, is the institution ready, in terms of faculty and other institutional

resources, to successfully implement the proposed program?

Yes, based on my reading of the NAPP and my discussions with MTSU faculty, staff, and administration during our virtual meetings of July 30 and 31, 2024.

15. Do you recommend approval of the proposed program and why?

I recommend approval of the program without hesitation. I believe the justification and rationale for the program provided in the NAPP is more than adequate. See the opening paragraphs of my report for more details on why I am recommending approval.

***Additional Recommendations:**

1. I recommend the creation of both an admissions committee and a curriculum committee for the program, as soon after official approval of the program as possible. I recommend that the coordinator of the program serve on both of these committees, even if it is only in the role of an ex-officio member who normally abstains from voting. I also recommend developing additional regular means of communication between the admissions committee and the curriculum committee (sharing meeting minutes, etc.). In my experience, this type of communication is critical for the success of a program like the one being proposed.
2. I recommend exploring the development of a dissection-based human anatomy course for future consideration as an additional elective for students that wish to pursue admission to medical, dental, or physical therapy school. Human gross anatomy can be one of the most challenging courses for first year students in these professional programs who today, often have no background whatsoever in anatomy. Providing this much needed background could be very helpful for those students and thus turn out to be another drawing card for the program. Of course, per our conversations during our meetings, an OSHA compliant dissection lab, a source for cadavers, and qualified faculty to teach this type of course are all important considerations. Recall my suggestion to contact anatomy faculty at local/regional professional schools for advice.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the proposal for an M.S. degree in Biomedical Sciences at Middle Tennessee State University. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. It was my pleasure to meet and talk with members of the faculty, staff, and administration at MTSU, some of your external community partners and collaborators, as well as staff members of the THEC.

University Provost
 110 Cope Administration Building
 Middle Tennessee State University
 Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132
 Office: (615) 898-2880 • Fax: (615) 898-5029



September 19, 2024

Julie A. Roberts, PhD
 Chief Academic Officer
 TN Higher Education Commission
 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., 9th Floor
 Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Roberts:

We sincerely thank you and THEC's Academic Affairs staff for the thoughtful review of MTSU's NAPP for a **Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science program**. Where appropriate, we have incorporated and highlighted in *blue* the suggestions below in the revised document. Previous requested changes remain highlighted in yellow.

LON/NAPP Section	THEC Comment	MTSU Response	NAPP page #
V: Projected Costs: Faculty	<i>Please ensure that cost of living adjustments costs and benefits are included as part of the cost calculation, when applicable.</i>	Not applicable, as adjunct pay has historically remained unchanged with cost-of-living increases.	NA
V: Projected Costs: Non-Instructional Staff	<i>Please ensure that benefits and cost of living adjustments are included as part of total costs, if applicable.</i>	Benefits were already included; cost-of-living has been added here and in the financial worksheet.	13; App B
VIII: Curriculum: Existing and New Courses	<i>Should the BMS course have a four-letter prefix?</i>	A three-letter prefix is acceptable at MTSU.	NA
IX: Students: Academic Standards	<i>Could you please elaborate on how the program's design will ensure representation and retention for [first generation and disadvantaged] students?</i>	This program is specifically designed for first generation or disadvantaged students who had a difficult start to college or a difficult transfer from community college to university and now need to demonstrate success in graduate work to compete for admission to health professional programs or for jobs in the biomedical sciences. In terms of retention, the one-on-one advising and work with the	45; See Student Support Services section as well.

		administrative support position and program director as well as the building of a supportive cohort in the introductory seminar course will all serve to help in this effort.	
IX: Students: Student Support Services	<i>Since the intended student population is those students interested in professional school, what supports and tutoring will be available to students for improving test scores, when applicable?</i>	First semester coursework in the program covers much of the core material found on standardized tests such as the MCAT and DAT and further preparation will be done by making use of the test prep materials already available through the Pre-Health advising center at MTSU.	47-49
Appendices: Course Syllabi	<i>The curriculum lists BMS as the seminar course, but the course is listed as BMS 6000 in the syllabus. Could you please clarify the correct numbering and ensure it's consistent across both parts of the NAPP?</i>	The course is now correctly listed as BMS 6000 Seminar in Biomedical Sciences throughout the proposal.	39; 43; App D

On July 30 and 31, 2024, Dr. John Bailey, associate teaching professor of Biological Sciences and coordinator of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Southern Mississippi, virtually visited MTSU to conduct an external review. We appreciate his thoughtful recommendations and have outlined our responses below. Where appropriate, we have incorporated and highlighted in *green* the suggestions in the revised document.

LON/NAPP Section	THEC Comment	MTSU Response	NAPP page #
Curriculum: Academic Program Requirements	<i>I recommend the creation of both an admissions committee and a curriculum committee for the program, as soon after final approval of the program as possible.</i>	Initially, the coordinating committee for the design of this program will be used to handle admission decisions and curriculum will be handled by the Chemistry department curriculum committee. We do not anticipate significant curriculum changes in the near term, so we will see how this process works before adding another committee. Once the program is running, we will look at the need for a separate admissions committee as well as the executive/coordinating committee.	NA

<p>VIII: Curriculum: Existing and New Courses</p>	<p><i>I recommend exploring the development of a dissection-based human anatomy course for future consideration as an additional elective for students that wish to pursue admission to medical, dental, or physical therapy school.</i></p>	<p>There have been preliminary discussions with faculty in PA program at MTSU. Both parties are agreeable to creating and sharing such a course, but coordinating such an effort will take time.</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p>IX: Students, Academic Standards</p>	<p><i>Admission standards are complex and different for those pursuing different future career objectives. Since students often change their minds, it would be helpful to make them more consistent.</i></p> <p><i>The total MCAT score of 504 seems a little high to me if used as an admissions criterion for an M.S. program.</i></p>	<p>This section has been revised to simplify options. PCAT has been removed, while the new PA-CAT has added as an option. For GPA, we have unified the required value for all options.</p> <p>The score has been lowered to 500.</p>	<p>45</p>

Again, thank you for the support as we pursue this degree option for students at MTSU. We look forward to the continued review process.

Sincerely,



Mark Byrnes
 Provost

March 17, 2022

Dr. Mark Byrnes
University Provost
MTSU Box CAB 110
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Dr. Byrnes:

It is with great pleasure that I write a letter of support for the non-thesis MS Program in Biomedical Sciences at MTSU. This program will allow more specific, upper division coursework in Biology and Biochemistry to help better prepare students for a job in the workforce.

When Dr. Farone approached me about this idea, I was thrilled. As Director of Recruitment and University Relations for Aegis Sciences Corporation, I have hired hundreds of MTSU graduates in student worker, intern, and multiple full-time positions over the last 10 years. While the BS level students are impressive, the opportunity to give them additional knowledge and hands-on in the laboratory will give them more confidence and knowledge to transition into a high technology laboratory.

In our analytical chemistry positions, the additional training in GC-MS and HPLC would be beneficial for them as well as us. As chemists develop their skills, they advance their chance for promotions into other position at Aegis, and this would absolutely help them get an early start.

On the molecular side, over the last 2 years, Aegis has grown the BioPharma Laboratory from a team of 5 to over 500. In the last 2 months, we have promoted over 80 team members in this laboratory who had a higher skillset and knowledge of molecular techniques. The MS Biomedical Sciences program would provide more training in cell and molecular, as well as PCR experience that is extremely helpful in this particular laboratory at Aegis.

I have been very impressed by the training given to the students at MTSU. Over the last 12 years, I have been fortunate enough to work with many of the professors in the sciences through my work at Aegis as well as through joint efforts with the American Chemical Society – local and national. Any time I have immediate hiring needs, MTSU is always my first go-to. I have sincerely appreciated our partnership over the years and look forward to it continuing.

If I can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at kara.kasakaitas@aegislabs.com, or by cell at 615.715.0360.

Best Regards,



Kara M. Allen KasaKaitas, RACR, ACSF
American Chemical Society Fellow
Director, Recruitment and University Relations, Aegis Sciences Corporation

Board of Directors

Glenn Perdue, MBA, AVA,
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Solas Bioventures

Maha Krishnamurthy
University of Tennessee
Research Foundation

April 19, 2023

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa L Parks Ave
9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

To whom this may concern,

Our organization, Life Science Tennessee, is writing to you in support of Professor Scott Handy's proposal to create a one-year Master of Science program for Biomedical Sciences at Middle Tennessee State University.

Life Science Tennessee is a statewide member-led organization that comprises more than over 100 companies and organization across Tennessee and the United States. These members are researchers, manufacturers, service providers, and experts in the fields of biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, biomedical technologies, life system technologies, biomedical devices, nutraceuticals, cosmeceuticals, food processing, and environmental biology.

As Life Science Tennessee represents a collective voice of Tennessee's life science industry, we support professor Handy's proposed 30 credit minimum biomedical science program at Middle Tennessee State University. In addition, we support the program's goal to provide advanced educational preparation to individuals who seek to establish a career in life science-related positions in Tennessee.

Currently, Tennessee's life science industry has roughly 2,899 companies and employs more than 44,375 individuals with an average annual salary of \$104,420. These numbers are projected to continue to increase in the coming years, which is why we need more educational opportunities for students to fulfill our growing workforce demand (per 2022 *BIO Tennessee Impact Report*).

We hope you will support Professor Scott Handy's proposed Biomedical Science Master Program at Middle Tennessee State University.

Most sincerely,



Glenn Perdue
Chairman



Abby Totter
Executive Director

Physician Assistant Studies Program
College of Behavioral and Health Sciences
MTSU Box 55
1301 East Main Street
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
615-898-2900



Provost Byrnes,

Please accept this memo as a letter of strong support for the development of a Master of Biomedical Science Program here at MTSU. This master's degree is commonly used as a way for students who have not performed as well as they would have liked in their undergraduate work to show that they have the capacity to succeed in a rigorous medical program. This degree is often a steppingstone into different medical careers including Physician Assistant (PA).

As a current PA Program Director and Admissions Director for five years, I have seen the Biomedical Science master's degree on many PA applicants' applications. Applicants who perform well in a graduate program that encompasses several basic science courses are seen as more competitive as compared to someone who has not. Applicants with lower undergraduate GPAs often do not want to simply re-take undergraduate courses. The master's in Biomedical Science allows students to work towards an actual master's degree while increasing their basic science GPA which is often a more appealing option for them.

The interest in the PA profession has grown significantly over the years. All PA programs receive significantly more applications than their allocated spots. Often times applicants want to know how they can be more competitive, and one of the main reasons given to them is to increase their GPA, and more specifically, their basic science GPA. I feel that the development of a Master of Biomedical Science Program here at MTSU would fill a need for many prospective health care students. MTSU's high reputation for quality education combined with an affordable cost would make this program very appealing. The development of this program has my full support and the support of Physician Assistant Program here at MTSU. The MTSU PA program would undoubtedly benefit from the applicants who are successful in this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marie Patterson".

9-14-22

Dr. Marie Patterson, DHSc, MSM, PA-C

MTSU Physician Assistant Studies Program Director



March 14, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

The Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University enthusiastically supports the new Masters in Biomedical Sciences program at Middle Tennessee State University. There are many medical school applicants who do not gain admission the first time they apply. Often times, they need to demonstrate their ability to succeed academically. Having this program at MTSU would be extremely beneficial for many reasons. Two being that MTSU is a state supported school and its location in the middle of Tennessee. MTSU also has the largest enrollment and the academic support to make this a successful program which would benefit many pre-meds and their future patients.

I advise a lot of pre-med students who are not successful in gaining admission the first time applying. Having this program at MTSU is much needed. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Cole

Stephanie Cole
Admissions Counselor
Quillen College of Medicine
ETSU
colesd@etsu.edu
423-439-2036



VANDERBILT School of Medicine
Vanderbilt Vaccine Center

Dr. Mark Byrnes
University Provost
MTSU Box CAB 110
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Dear Provost Byrnes:

It is my pleasure to provide a letter of support for the MS Program in Biomedical Sciences at MTSU. This program will allow students to receive additional upper division coursework in Biology and Biochemistry to prepare them for the rapidly expanding research laboratory positions at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Over the years we have employed many great MTSU students. As Associate Director of the Vanderbilt Vaccine Center, I, personally, have been impressed by the training given to the undergraduate students at MTSU. The MS in Biomedical Sciences will give your graduates additional academic background as well as more laboratory skills and experiences that will make them very marketable in the research laboratories at Vanderbilt and beyond.

If I can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at Robert.carnahan@vumc.org, or 615-308-2987.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. H. Carnahan'.

Robert H. Carnahan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Departments of Pediatrics and Radiology
Associate Director, Vanderbilt Vaccine Center
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

To whom it may concern,

My name is Thomas Woodward, lead scientist at Volunteer Botanicals and graduate of MTSU's MSPS in Biotechnology program. The MSPS program prepared me for my current position in a way that I do not believe was intended. I do believe the program does an excellent job at preparing the students with having to speak and give presentations to a group in multiple formats, whether that be online or in person. Second, and the most positive aspect of this program, the students are forced out of their comfort zones by having to do multiple interviews and eventually intern for a "real" job. Most students in the program have not been part of a job that is in their field of learning, and this program allows them the unique opportunity to have to strive for a position at a place they hoped to work for, or to intern with a place they learn to love. This allows for the students to know if they want to continue in that job or move on to the next. This program also forces learning outside of a textbook and pressures learning through experience, which often is the best learning tool.

Our company would love it if Middle Tennessee State University also provided a MS program in Biomedical Sciences. Our mission is to evolve plant-based healing through technology and innovation. We at Volunteer Botanicals have proprietary processes that allow us to convert medicinal plant oil/extracts into our Satival powders and water-soluble liquids. Once in this format, you can compound with other medicinal plants to create all-natural dietary supplements.

All in all, I believe my MS in Biotechnology and the internship program does a great job at preparing students for industry work, and I believe the internship is an essential aspect in allowing students to advance their futures in a less stressful way. I also believe our company would love to have our local university provide a MS program in Biomedical Science. This program would add value to our company.

Sincerely,



Thomas Woodward
Lead Scientist
Volunteer Botanicals, LLC



Financial Projections Form

Institution	Middle Tennessee State University
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Program Name	MS in Biomedical Sciences
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Projected One-Time Expenditures						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Non-Instructional Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Graduate Assistants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Accreditation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Consultants	\$4,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Information Technology	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Library resources	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marketing	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Facilities	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i>	<i>\$6,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>

Projected Recurring Expenditures						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$0	\$40,200	\$40,200	\$40,200	\$40,200	\$40,200
Non-Instructional Staff	\$40,000	\$41,200	\$42,436	\$43,709	\$45,020	\$46,380
Graduate Assistants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Accreditation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Consultants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Information Technology	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Library	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marketing	\$0	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Facilities	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Other	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i>	<i>\$40,000</i>	<i>\$85,900</i>	<i>\$87,136</i>	<i>\$88,409</i>	<i>\$89,720</i>	<i>\$91,080</i>
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$46,000	\$85,900	\$87,136	\$88,409	\$89,720	\$91,080

Projected Revenue						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition	\$0	\$192,720	\$218,416	\$231,264	\$256,960	\$282,656
Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenues	\$0	\$192,720	\$218,416	\$231,264	\$256,960	\$282,656



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **Approval of New Academic Program
M.S. in Digital Media**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The **M.S. in Digital Media** in the College of Media and Entertainment is 30 credit hours and fully online. Initially approved by the MTSU Board of Trustees in April 2023, the degree will provide students with a broad range of digital media expertise, including social media best practices, digital data collection, ethical uses of AI, search engine optimization, website creation and management, and audience metrics. We will respond to the external reviewer's report by early December and expect to be scheduled for THEC's Winter meeting.

A New Academic Program Proposal is attached for review and approval.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE



STATE UNIVERSITY

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL (NAPP) M.S. in Digital Media

Table of Contents	
<i>Section</i>	<i>Page Number</i>
LON Evaluation from THEC Staff	3-12
Provost Mark Byrnes response to the LON Evaluation	13-15
Revised Letter of Notification (with President's Letter of Support)	16-35
Section VII: Implementation Timeline	36
Section VIII: Curriculum	36-41
Program-Specific Goals/Objectives	36-37
Student Learning Outcomes	37
Academic Program Requirements	37-38
Existing and New Courses	38-40
Program of Study	40-41
Assessment and Evaluation	41
Articulation and Transfer	41
Section IX: Students	41-43
Academic Standards	41-42
Marketing and Recruitment	42-43
Student Support Services	43
Section X: Instructional and Administrative Resources	43-45
Current Faculty	43-45
Anticipated New Faculty and Instructional Staff	45
Non-Instructional Staff	45
Section XI: Resources	45-47
Equipment	45
Information Technology	45
Library Resources	45-46
Facilities	46
Other Resources	46-47
Appendix A: Letters of Support	48-53
Finn Partners	48
Gannett	49

redpepper	50
Rutherford County Schools	51
Tennessee Justice Center	52
United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties	53
Appendix B: Updated THEC Financial Projections Form	54
Appendix C: Faculty CVs	55-93
Appendix D: Course Syllabi	94-193



ROBERT M. SMITH
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
312 ROSA L. PARKS AVENUE, 9TH FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243
(615) 741-3605

TO: Mark Byrnes, University Provost
Middle Tennessee State University

FROM: Julie A. Roberts, Chief Academic Officer
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

SUBJECT: Middle Tennessee State University
Letter of Notification: Digital Media, Master of Science (MS)

DATE: August 11, 2023

Thank you for the submission of the Letter of Notification (LON) for the Digital Media, Master of Science (MS) program. Per THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process, the LON is evaluated on the following criteria: alignment with state master plan and institutional mission; feasibility; institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program; and program costs and revenues.

After reviewing the LON, I approve Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) plan to develop the New Academic Program Proposal (NAPP) for the Digital Media, MS. As MTSU continues to develop the proposed program, all concerns italicized on the attached LON evaluation must be reflected in the NAPP. It is understood the proposed program will be developed in accordance with the mission of MTSU and will meet the Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education 2015–2025-degree completion and workforce development objectives.

Attachment

cc: Sidney A. McPhee, MTSU, President
Robert M. Smith, THEC, Interim Executive Director
Amy Aldridge Sanford, MTSU, Vice Provost of Academic Programs
Ken Blake, MTSU, Professor School of Journalism and Strategic Media
Sally Ann Cruishank, MTSU, Associate Professor School of Journalism and Strategic Media
Anjelica Jones, THEC, Director of Academic Affairs

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Letter of Notification Evaluation
August 11, 2023



The evaluation of the Letter of Notification (LON) is in accordance with the THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process. The evaluation is conducted by interested parties and THEC staff. The LON is posted on the THEC website for a 15-day period of comment by interested parties. Based on the internal and external evaluation, THEC will make a determination to support, not to support, or defer a decision based on a revised LON.

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University	LON Submission Date: June 19, 2023
Academic Program, Degree Designation: Digital Media, Master of Science (MS)	
Concentration(s): None proposed	
Proposed CIP Code and Title: 09.0102 Mass Communication/ Media Studies	
Proposed Implementation Date: May 2024	
Time Period Posted on Website for Public Comment: June 20 – July 20, 2023	
Academic Program Liaison(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amy Aldridge Sanford, PhD, Vice Provost for Academic Programs, amy.aldridge.sanford@mtsu.edu ▪ Ken Blake, Professor School of Journalism and Strategic Media, ken.blake@mtsu.edu ▪ Sally Ann Cruishank, Associate Professor School of Journalism and Strategic Media, sallyann.cruishank@mtsu.edu 	

Note: Comments in italics within this document should be addressed in the NAPP.

Letter of support from President/Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A letter of support dated June 16, 2023, sent from MTSU President McPhee was included.
Section II: Background	
Background on academic program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This proposed MS in Digital Media will provide students with a broad range of digital media expertise, including social media best practices, digital data collection and analysis, search engine optimization, website creation and management, audience metrics, and mobile-optimized media, skills which are valuable in a growing number of fields. ▪ The proposed program will attract students interested in public relations, advertising, journalism, and related fields, as well as professionals working in other disciplines that utilize digital media for workflow, promotion, and/or training. ▪ The proposed program will be offered online, providing flexibility to working professionals interested in upskilling. ▪ Hanover Research identified mass communication and media studies as a 'high growth' area in Tennessee. Further, EAB listed media and communication as having a high and growing labor

	<p>market with few regional competitors for Middle Tennessee State University.</p>
<p>Purpose and nature of academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program is a 30-credit hour, fully online program aimed towards currently working professionals, primarily targeted to those in the fields of public relations, advertising, journalism, and similar fields. ▪ The proposed program will allow students to update and expand their expertise in social media, digital analytics, communication, technologies, data journalism, media theory, and applied research methods. ▪ The proposed program has two primary purposes: (1) to allow students already working in a media related field to learn cutting-edge digital media skills to advance their careers, and (2) to allow students who have degrees in other fields become more familiar with digital media practices. ▪ Graduates of the proposed program will be prepared to work in several in-demand areas that rely on digital media expertise, including social media best practices, digital data collection and analysis, search engine optimization (SEO), website creation and management, audience metrics, and mobile-optimized content creation. ▪ The proposed program will be part of MTSU’s School of Journalism and Strategic Media and offered alongside the school’s in-person Media Communication, Master of Science.
<p>Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program aligns with two key initiatives outlined in the State Master Plan for Higher Education. First, it prepares graduates to engage with and master new technologies, while also building critical thinking skills that will allow them to adapt to the next generation of innovation (see the Master Plan, page 3, which notes “emerging technologies have created a pace of change faster than at any time in history” (pg. 3). ▪ Second, the proposed program supports Tennessee’s degree completion goals by providing a flexible and accessible degree, available to a diverse group of students including working professionals, which will lead to “increased job opportunities, and a greater likelihood of earning a living wage” (Master Plan, p. 30). ▪ The proposed program also aligns with MTSU’s institutional mission and strategic goals. ▪ First, the program will prepare students to transition into the professional world and help facilitate career advancement, both of which are key goals in MTSU’s Quest 2025. ▪ In addition, MTSU’s Mission Statement includes the desire to enhance “access through unique programs, distance learning, and advising to meet the needs of a diverse population.” The online delivery of the program promotes engagement of a diverse student population, which further supports MTSU’s Academic

	<p>Master Plan, which aims to “enhance academic quality” and “foster student-centered learning.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Please provide additional alignment to the State Master Plan 																		
<p>Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed Digital Media, MS will complement and not compete with the School of Journalism and Strategic Media’s current master’s program because of its unique design to attract more non-traditional students and working professionals. ▪ Long standing partnerships and collaboratives in the school will create internships and opportunities for students of the proposed program. ▪ Current faculty have extensive industry experience and routinely publish allowing students to benefit from already well-established resources. ▪ Other resources include the James E. Walker Library’s comprehensive media and communication collection, a stocked equipment room, and access to software including the Adobe Creative Suite and Brandwatch. 																		
<p>Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ten higher-education institutions in Tennessee, including MTSU, offer similar degrees. ▪ Please revise the table on page 6 to differentiate graduate from undergraduate degrees and to include the degree name listed in the THEC API for each program in CIP 09.0102. ▪ Austin Peay offers the state’s only fully online Mass Communication/Media Studies master’s degree. Its four available concentrations - corporate communication, general communication, marketing communication, and media management - differ substantively from the proposed program’s digital media emphasis. ▪ East Tennessee State University offers an MFA in digital media. However, MTSU believes its fine-arts focus, two-year timetable, and on-ground delivery will likely attract fundamentally different students than the ones the proposed program anticipates serving. 																		
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>CIP Code</th> <th>College/ University</th> <th>2019-2020 Completion</th> <th>2020-2021 Completion</th> <th>2021-2022 Completion</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>09.0102</td> <td>Middle Tennessee State University</td> <td>110</td> <td>150</td> <td>77</td> <td>337</td> </tr> <tr> <td>09.0102</td> <td>Austin Peay State University</td> <td>114</td> <td>105</td> <td>102</td> <td>321</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	CIP Code	College/ University	2019-2020 Completion	2020-2021 Completion	2021-2022 Completion	Total	09.0102	Middle Tennessee State University	110	150	77	337	09.0102	Austin Peay State University	114	105	102	321
CIP Code	College/ University	2019-2020 Completion	2020-2021 Completion	2021-2022 Completion	Total														
09.0102	Middle Tennessee State University	110	150	77	337														
09.0102	Austin Peay State University	114	105	102	321														

	09.0 102	East Tennessee State University	111	96	110	317
	09.0 102	University of Memphis	83	70	79	232
	09.0 102	The university of Tennessee- Knoxville	28	21	30	79
	09.0 102	Lane College	17	11	10	38
	09.0 102	Johnson University	7	13	3	23
	09.0 102	Belmont University	10	7	3	20
	09.0 102	Trevecca Nazarene University	7	3	7	17
	09.0 102	Carson- Newman University	0	0	0	0
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed master’s degree will not be eligible for accreditation under the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) because it focuses on more academically oriented theory and methodology than ACEJMC allows, and because it does not require a professional oriented thesis, project, or comprehensive exam. ▪ The proposed master’s degree will undergo external program review under the THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines, just as the in-person master’s program in Media and Communication currently does. 					
Administrative Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This program will be housed in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media (SoJSM) in the College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU. ▪ The existing program director for the Media and Communication, MS will also direct the proposed program. ▪ The current organizational chart is provided in the LON (pg. 7). 					

Section III: Feasibility Study	
Student interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An online student interest survey was conducted March 15 through April 20, 2023. The online survey gathered responses from a sample of students enrolled in the MTSU's School of Journalism and Strategic Media courses during the Spring 2023 semester and alumni contacted via email by MTSU's Alumni Association. ▪ Of the 318 respondents, 230 (72 percent) were current students, and 88 (28 percent) were alumni. ▪ Of the respondents, 78 percent indicated attractiveness to the prompt of "how much each kind of course ... would, or would not, attract you to the program". ▪ Expressed attractiveness toward the proposed program was higher among alumni than current students (84 percent for alumni, 76 percent for current students). ▪ <i>Please provide clarifying language for the "attractiveness" indicator in the survey.</i>
Local and Regional Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program will appeal directly to workers in three media-related occupations designated as "in-demand" for the Northern Middle Tennessee region in the latest (2022) <i>Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report</i>, all of which are classified in the Standard Occupational Code (SOC) 27-0000: "Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations" range. The three occupations are Graphic Designers (27-1024), with 186 projected annual openings; Producers and Directors (27-2012), with 176 projected annual openings; and Editors (27-3041), with 129 projected annual openings. All three projections are for Northern Middle Tennessee through 2028. ▪ In addition, the Graphic Designer occupation is listed as in-demand in the Southern Middle Tennessee region, with a projected 15 annual openings through 2023. <i>Please provide the source.</i> ▪ The three in-demand media occupations described above will generate a projected 506 openings annually in the region, more than the annual number of undergraduate CIP Code 9.0201 degrees. It should be noted that a master's degree is not generally required for any occupation in SOC 27-000. Yet, having a master's degree increases one's ability to find a job, be promoted, and receive higher pay. <i>Please provide data or research to substantiate this claim.</i> ▪ A 2022 analysis conducted by Hanover Research identified mass communication and media studies as one of Tennessee's 16 "high growth" areas of graduate education, characterized by a combination of above-average growth in student demand and above-average volume of degrees awarded.
Employer Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data from the 2022 Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects an average of 2,122 job openings per year through 2030 in media-related occupations.

- The 2021 national employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts 155,600 openings per year through 2031 in occupations that the proposed degree would serve.
- Seven of these occupations are projected to have faster than average growth for occupations requiring college-level credentials.
- **Please list the seven occupations projected to have faster than average growth.**

- Community and Industry Partnerships**
- Letters of support are provided by:
 - Ronald Roberts, Managing Partner at Finn Partners
 - Jaron Jackson, Design Director of Digital Product Design at Nike
The job/title listed in the text of the LON does not match the job/title listed on the letter itself. Please reconcile.
 - Jessica Nerad, People Team Director at redpepper
 - James Evans, Communications Director at Rutherford County Schools
 - D’Anelle Desire, Communications Director at the Tennessee Justice Center
 - Kristen Swann, Vice President of Collective Impact and Strategic Initiatives at the United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties
 - Emily Brown, Managing Editor of Audience and Platforms at USA Today.
 - These letters demonstrate strong support for the proposed program, pointing to the need for trained graduates with the key skills the program aims to cover, the rapidly evolving nature of the digital media industry, and a willingness to partner with MTSU to offer internships and mentoring.

Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

- Projected Enrollment and Graduates**
- The proposed program will be structured using seven-week course scheduling, which will allow students to complete the 30-credit master’s degree in one academic year. Students will enroll in 12-credit hours in the fall and spring semesters, and six credit hours in the summer.
 - **Will the program be structured to only accommodate full-time enrollment? If not, please provide some narrative and estimates that include anticipated part-time enrollment.**
 - **Additionally, the narrative regarding tuition revenues discusses part-time enrollment. Please make sure these are consistent.**
 - **Please provide attrition calculation information and make sure it is aligned with tuition revenue narrative.**

Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1	2024-2025	8	1	7
2	2025-2026	10	1	9

	3	2026-2027	11	1	10
	4	2027-2028	12	1	11
	5	2028-2029	13	1	12

Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver Proposed Program

Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new faculty is currently anticipated. Growth of the proposed program’s enrollment may result in the addition of one or more tenure-track faculty.
Non-Instructional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new costs associated with non-instructional staff are expected for this program
Graduate Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new graduate assistants will be needed for this program. At present, there are no expectations of any incremental graduate assistant resources.
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this program will not be accredited, it will undergo an external program review under the THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines every seven years, beginning in Year 4 of this program. Costs associated with this review are limited to approximately \$1,300 to cover the travel, lodging, per diem, and an honorarium. It is anticipated that the first review will happen in year four.
Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consultants are required to develop or run this program. <i>Please revise to include costs associated with the external review of the proposed program as a cost in the planning year.</i>
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No equipment costs are required to develop or run this program.
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no new information technology costs associated with this program. Everything needed for the program, including D2L and media-related software, are already covered under MTSU licenses.
Library Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new library acquisitions will be required.
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A projected marketing cost of \$10,000 in the first year and \$1,000 each additional is expected to generate and sustain awareness of the program.
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new facilities will be required for this program.
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No travel expenses will be required for this program.
Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional resources will be required for this program.

Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program

Tuition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipated revenue in Year 1 is \$54,090, which will cover anticipated expenses (\$32,500). These calculations are based on the \$601 per credit hour cost of tuition. Year 1 totals assume five in-state, part-time students taking six credit hours per semester. Projected revenues for Year 2 through 5 are based on increases in enrollment and a 10 percent attrition rate. Part-time students are anticipated to graduate in 24 months.
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grants are anticipated to fund this program.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No other revenue is anticipated at this time.

THEC Financial Projections Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial Projections Form provided in Appendix B of the LON.
Public Comment	
Public Comments Received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Comment received from Gregory Marlow, Assistant Professor at ETSU. Letter submitted as Appendix A. ▪ <i>Please address concerns raised by ETSU in their public comment.</i>



June 26, 2023

Subject: Concerns about Proposed MS Degree in Digital Media (CIP Code 09.0102)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my thoughts regarding the proposed Master of Science (MS) degree in Digital Media at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). While I appreciate MTSU's commitment to expanding its academic offerings, I believe there are certain aspects of the proposed program that warrant thoughtful reconsideration.

My primary concern stems from the potential confusion that may arise among prospective students due to the overlap in program names and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. Currently, East Tennessee State University (ETSU) offers Bachelor of Science (BS) and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in Digital Media, which are appropriately classified under the CIP code 10.0304 - Animation, Interactive Technology, Video Graphics, and Special Effects. However, MTSU's proposed program, sharing the name "Digital Media" but falling under CIP code 09.0102 for Mass Communication/Media Studies, may inadvertently cause confusion.

I would like to highlight the International Digital Media and Arts Association (iDMAa), which highlights the creation-oriented understanding of "Digital Media." This organization's viewpoint aligns with ETSU's program and reinforces the notion that "Digital Media" encompasses the creative process rather than the study of media. This is in line with ETSU's CIP code 10.0304. Conversely, CIP code 09.0102 primarily pertains to Mass Communication/Media Studies and does not adequately represent the creation and production aspects of digital media.

To address the potential confusion and ensure clarity for prospective students, I recommend considering a name change for MTSU's proposed program. By selecting a name that accurately reflects the program's focus and differentiates it from ETSU's offerings, the university can alleviate any potential ambiguity and provide a more distinct identity for the program.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. I trust that you will give careful consideration to this feedback and take appropriate actions to address it.

Sincerely,

Gregory Marlow

Gregory Marlow - Assistant Professor and Graduate Coordinator
ETSU - Department of Digital Media
Marlowg@ETSU.edu

University Provost
 110 Cope Administration Building
 Middle Tennessee State University
 Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132
 Office: (615) 898-2880 • Fax: (615) 898-5029



July 15, 2024

Julie A. Roberts, PhD
 Chief Academic Officer
 TN Higher Education Commission
 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., 9th Floor
 Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Roberts:

Our sincerest gratitude to you and THEC’s Academic Affairs staff for the thoughtful review of MTSU’s LON for a **Digital Media, Master of Science program**. Where appropriate, we have incorporated and highlighted in *yellow* the suggestions below in the revised document.

LON Section	THEC Staff Comment	MTSU Response	LON Page #
Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission	<i>Please provide additional alignment to the State Master Plan.</i>	More information is included on how the program aligns with the State Master Plan, particularly regarding artificial intelligence and data analysis.	20
Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions	<i>Please revise the table on page 6 to differentiate graduate from undergraduate degrees and to include the degree name listed in the THEC API for each program in CIP 09.0102.</i>	Table has been revised to differentiate graduate from undergraduate degrees. Degree names have also been added.	21-22
Student interest	<i>Please provide clarifying language for the “attractiveness” indicator in the survey.</i>	The survey measured the program’s “attractiveness” by assessing the appeal of its curriculum among survey respondents. Specifically, respondents read descriptions of seven types of courses the program will offer. For each type, they were asked to indicate, using a five-item ordinal response set, how much the course type would, or would not, attract them to the program. Available responses were “Definitely would attract me,” “Probably would attract me,” “Undecided,” “Probably would not attract me,” and “Definitely would not attract me.” A table has also been included to show student responses to the question.	24
Local and Regional Demand	<i>Please provide the source for graphic designer as in-demand.</i>	Source is better articulated: Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report 2022, https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/thecc/research/supply-and-demand.html .	25

LON Section	THEC Staff Comment	MTSU Response	LON Page #
Local and Regional Demand	<i>Please provide data or research to substantiate this claim: “Having a master’s degree increases one’s ability to find a job, be promoted, and receive higher pay.”</i>	Data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has been included.	26
Employer Demand	<i>Please list the seven occupations projected to have faster than average growth.</i>	The seven occupations – public relations specialists, graphic designers, producers and directors, writers and authors, fundraisers, web developers, and editors – have been included.	27
Community and Industry Partnerships – Jaron Jackson letter	<i>The job/title listed in the text of the LON does not match the job/title listed on the letter itself. Please reconcile.</i>	Jackson letter has been removed from the packet.	29
Projected Enrollment and Graduates	<i>Will the program be structured to only accommodate full-time enrollment? If not, please provide some narrative and estimates that include anticipated part-time enrollment.</i>	The program will be open to part-time students; however, part-time enrollees will need to understand that they cannot finish the program in a calendar year. More explanation has been provided.	30-31
Projected Enrollment and Graduates	<i>Additionally, the narrative regarding tuition revenues discusses part-time enrollment. Please make sure these are consistent.</i>	The narrative has been edited to clarify the involvement of part-time enrollment.	30-31
Projected Enrollment and Graduates	<i>Please provide attrition calculation information and make sure it is aligned with tuition revenue narrative.</i>	A table including attrition projections has now been included. The revisions also affect the tuition revenue estimates and the THEC Financial Projection Form.	31
Consultants	<i>Please revise to include costs associated with the external review of the proposed program as a cost in the planning year.</i>	The cost of the external reviewer, \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend, has now been included. The revisions also affect the THEC Financial Projection Form.	31
Public Comments	<p><i>Please address the 3 primary concerns raised by ETSU in their public comment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Media is not included in the title or description of either CIP code. • Digital Media should encompass the creative process rather than the study 	<p>While we appreciate ETSU’s comment, we respectfully disagree with the three concerns raised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSU is confident that this program meets the definition of the CIP code (09.0102) being proposed. • iDMAa’s own organizational description supports both creative and scholarly work in digital media. 	33-35

LON Section	THEC Staff Comment	MTSU Response	LON Page #
	<p>of media, according to the International Digital Media and Arts Association (iDMAa).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential students will confuse ETSU’s MFA and MTSU’s MS degrees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ETSU’s program offers concentrations in animation, game design, visual effects, and visualization. MTSU’s proposed program will offer courses in social media strategy, search engine optimization, quantitative and qualitative research methodology, and media communication theory. 	

Again, thank you for the support as we pursue this degree option for students at MTSU. We look forward to the continued review process.

Sincerely,


 Mark Byrnes, PhD
 Provost

Office of the President

Middle Tennessee State University
204 Cope Administration Building
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132
615-898-2622
FAX: 615-898-2507



16 June 2023

Robert Smith, PhD
Interim Executive Director
TN Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa L. Parks Ave, 9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Smith:

In accordance with Tennessee Higher Education Commission Policy A 1.0, Section 1.0.5A, this letter signifies my support for the development of the M.S. in Digital Marketing at Middle Tennessee State University. MTSU's Board of Trustees enthusiastically approved the program as a "Degree Under Consideration" in April 2023.

The Board and I believe that the addition of the 30-credit hour, online degree program will enhance MTSU's portfolio and will strengthen the University's contribution to the workforce demands of the Middle Tennessee region and beyond – as illustrated in the seven letters of support from industry leaders. The program will be housed in MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment.

We appreciate THEC staff's consideration of this Letter of Notification and look forward to continued collaboration with your office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sidney A. McPhee".

Sidney A. McPhee
President

CC: Dr. Julie Roberts, THEC Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Mark Byrnes, MTSU Provost

REVISED LETTER OF NOTIFICATION (LON) M.S. in Digital Media

Section I: Overview

Program Information

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

Academic Program: Digital Media

Concentrations: NA

Degree Designation: Master of Science

Proposed CIP Code: 09.0102

CIP Code Title: Mass Communication/Media Studies

CIP Code Definition: A program that focuses on the analysis and criticism of media institutions and media texts, how people experience and understand media content, and the roles of media in producing and transforming culture. Includes instruction in communications regulation, law, and policy; media history; media aesthetics, interpretation, and criticism; the social and cultural effects of mass media; cultural studies; the economics of media industries; visual and media literacy; and the psychology and behavioral aspects of media messages, interpretation, and utilization.

Academic Program Liaison Name and Contact Information

Dr. Ken Blake, Professor
School of Journalism and Strategic Media
615-898-2226
Ken.Blake@mtsu.edu

Dr. Sally Ann Cruikshank, Associate
Professor
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Proposed Implementation Date

May 2025

Section II: Background

Background concerning academic program development

Understanding how to analyze, navigate and create digital media is no longer valuable solely within media industries. The growth of social media, remote work, and digital commerce means that professionals in a growing range of fields need to expand their expertise in communication technologies. This proposed online master’s degree will attract students from across the workforce who want to gain a competitive edge in the job market by elevating their knowledge of digital media.

This proposed M.S. in Digital Media will provide students with a broad range of digital media expertise, including social media best practices, digital data collection and analysis, search engine optimization, website creation and management, audience metrics, mobile-optimized media, and more, including the theoretical and methodological foundations for such expertise. The program will attract students interested in public relations, advertising, journalism, and related fields, as well as professionals working in other disciplines that utilize digital media for workflow, promotion, and/or training. Furthermore, by offering this 30-hour degree fully online, the program will attract current working professionals who want to expand their skills while also needing the flexibility of online courses.

Hanover Research identified mass communication and media studies - particularly digital media - as a “high growth” area in Tennessee, given the area’s above-average growth in student demand. EAB further listed media and communication as having a high and growing labor market with few regional competitors for Middle Tennessee State University. Researchers have also found employers who previously have not needed workers with digital expertise are now seeking applicants familiar with technology.¹

As part of the School of Journalism and Strategic Media, this proposed M.S. in Digital Media will be taught by award-winning journalism, advertising, and public relations professors, while also incorporating the School’s partnerships with media practitioners and companies to supplement career development of students. This new degree will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of digital media practices and prepare graduates for positions in an ever-changing, digital-focused workforce.

Purpose and nature of academic program

Description of Academic Program	This master’s program will allow students to update and expand their expertise in social media, digital analytics,
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¹ Hecker, I. and Loprest, P. (2019). Foundational Digital Skills for Career Progress. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100843/foundational_digital_skills_for_career_progress_2.pdf

	communication technologies, data journalism, media theory, and applied research methods.
Total Credit Hours	This will be a 30-hour program.
Target Audience	This program will attract people interested in public relations, advertising, journalism and related fields who need the flexibility of online coursework.
Purpose	There are two primary purposes for the M.S. Digital Media. The first is to allow students who are already working in a media related field to learn new and cutting-edge approaches to assist in the advancement of their careers. The second purpose is to allow students who have degrees in other fields become more familiar with digital media practices, considering there are few professions that do not include some form of digital media management, such as social media or website creation or administration.
Program Outcomes	<p>This program will prepare students to work in various fields that rely on digital media expertise. This includes, but is not limited to, public relations, advertising, and journalism.</p> <p>Students will graduate prepared to fill in-demand areas of digital media work including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media best practices ● Digital data collection and analysis ● Search engine optimization (SEO) ● Website creation and management ● Audience metrics ● Mobile-optimized content creation
Delivery Method	This program will be delivered fully online.
Any Other Pertinent Information	The program will be part of MTSU's School of Journalism and Strategic Media and offered alongside the school's in-person M.S. in Media Communication.

Alignment with state master plan and institutional mission

This proposed master's degree aligns with and supports both the state master plan and MTSU's institutional mission, as well as MTSU's Quest 2025 initiative and Academic Master Plan. As the [State Master Plan](#) notes, "emerging technologies have created a pace of change faster than at any time in history" (pg. 3). This degree directly prepares students to engage with and master new technologies, while also building critical thinking skills that will allow graduates to adapt to the next generation of innovation. This degree will prepare students for high-demand jobs across an array of industries, given the use of digital media across so many sectors of the

workforce. This degree will not only prepare students for jobs now, it will also prepare them for positions in the future, given the technology-centric focus of the program. As noted in the [State Master Plan](#), people “must learn to interact with artificial intelligence using critical thinking, data analysis, and diverse communication skills rather than simply reply on artificial intelligence to complete a variety of tasks” (p. 34). Critical thinking, data analysis using artificial intelligence, and a variety of communication approaches are at the core of this program. It will further prepare students to transition into the professional world and create opportunities for working professionals to advance their career, which are key goals of [MTSU's Quest 2025](#).

Furthermore, as this master’s degree will be delivered fully online, it will support Tennessee’s Drive to 55 initiative. This degree will be accessible to a diverse group of students, including working professionals who cannot take time off or people who live too far away for in-person courses. As noted in the [State Master Plan](#), increasing access to education will lead to “increased job opportunities, and a greater likelihood of earning a livable wage” (pg. 30). The delivery method also support’s [MTSU's mission statement](#), which includes “enhancing access through unique programs, distance learning, and advising to meet the needs of a diverse student population.” Promoting engagement of a diverse student population further supports [MTSU's Academic Master Plan](#), which aims to “enhance academic quality” and “foster student-centered learning.”

Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program

The M.S. in Digital Media will have a positive impact on enrollment. This program will not be in competition with the School of Journalism and Strategic Media’s current master’s program, as it is designed to attract a different type of student. The fully online approach to this degree will make it possible for more non-traditional students and working professionals to enroll. Furthermore, current partnerships and collaborative agreements that already exist within the School of Journalism and Strategic Media, including those with media companies that provide internships and opportunities for students, will extend to this new degree, which will only strengthen the program, the school, the college, and the university.

This new program will further benefit from the existing resources used to support the current, in-person master’s program. This includes the School of Journalism and Strategic Media’s faculty – who have extensive industry experience and routinely publish in peer-reviewed research journals and juried creative exhibitions. Other resources include the James E. Walker Library’s comprehensive media and communication collection, a stocked equipment room, and access to software including the Adobe Creative Suite and Brandwatch.

Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions

Ten higher-education institutions in Tennessee, including MTSU, offer degrees under the 09.0102 Federal CIP code. Combined, they awarded 1,384 degrees between 2019 and 2021, although only 258, or about 19%, were awarded at the graduate level. Fully 93% of the degrees - and all of the graduate-level degrees - were awarded by the state’s public universities. The proposed degree would be the state’s only graduate-level Digital Media master’s degree to be offered both entirely online and on an accelerated schedule that would allow students to

complete the program in a single calendar year.

Presently, Austin Peay offers the state’s only fully online Mass Communication/Media Studies master’s degree. Its four available concentrations - corporate communication, general communication, marketing communication, and media management - differ substantively from the proposed program’s digital media emphasis. Meanwhile, East Tennessee State University offers an M.F.A. in digital media. But its fine-arts focus, two-year timetable, and on-ground delivery attract fundamentally different students than the ones the proposed program anticipates serving.

All other masters-level Mass Communication/Media Studies programs available at Tennessee higher education institutions at traditional, in-person, two-year degrees. The following table lists yearly counts, by institution, of CIP 09.0102 degrees conferred in Tennessee.

“Mass Communication/Media Studies” undergraduate and graduate degrees conferred by Tennessee higher education institutions, 2019 - 2021

Institution	Degree level and name	Year		
		2019	2020	2021
	Associate's			
Johnson	Mass communication/media studies	1	1	0
Lane College	Mass communication/media studies	0	0	0
	Total associate's:	1	1	0
	Bachelor's			
Austin Peay	Professional communication (BA & BS)	84	96	77
Belmont	Mass communication/media studies	7	10	3
Carson-Newman	Mass communication/media studies	0	0	0
E. Tennessee				
State	Media and communication (BA & BS)	78	82	97
Johnson	Mass communication/media studies	12	6	3
Lane College	Mass communication/media studies	11	17	10
MTSU	Media and entertainment	142	100	70
Trevecca	Mass communication/media studies	3	7	7
U. Memphis	Communication	58	71	73
	Total bachelor's:	395	389	340
	Master's			
Austin Peay	Communication arts	21	18	25
E. Tennessee	Brand and media strategy	18	29	13

State					
MTSU	Media and communication	8	10	7	
UT-Knoxville	Communication and information	13	22	24	
U. Memphis	Communication	9	2	4	
	Total master's"	69	81	73	
Doctoral					
UT-Knoxville	Communication and information	8	6	6	
U. Memphis	Communication	3	10	2	
	Total doctoral:	11	16	8	
Grand total:		476	487	421	

Accreditation

Like the School of Journalism and Strategic Media's in-person master's program in Media and Communication, this proposed master's degree will not be eligible for accreditation under the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), the organization that accredits the undergraduate program in MTSU's School of Journalism and Strategic Media. ACEJMC will accredit only a "professionally oriented" master's program, which ACEJMC's [Policies of Accreditation](#) define as a master's program that requires more than half of its courses to be of a professional nature and requires students to complete a professionally-oriented thesis, project or comprehensive examination. While the proposed program will help students acquire and refine valuable professional skills, most courses will emphasize academically oriented theory and methodology. Furthermore, the proposed program will not require a thesis, project, or comprehensive exam.

However, this proposed master's degree will undergo external program review under the [THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines](#), just as the in-person master's program in Media and Communication currently does. This review, which happens every seven years, includes a self-study and an assessment of 32 criteria grouped into six categories: learning outcomes, curriculum, student experience, faculty, learning resources, and support. The program anticipates applying for accreditation during the program's fourth year. Furthermore, the development of this proposed degree will also be completed in accordance with all Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policies.

Administrative structure

This program will be housed in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media (SoJSM) in the College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU, and the program director who currently oversees

the Media and Communication master's degree will administer it. The following figure depicts the organizational chart.



Section III: Feasibility Study

Student interest survey

Strong majorities of the 317 School of Journalism and Strategic Media alumni and current students who responded to a questionnaire about the program said its proposed courses “probably” or “definitely” would attract them to the program.

Field period and respondent demographics. Conducted March 15 through April 20, 2023, the online survey gathered responses from a convenience sample of students enrolled in the School’s courses during the Spring 2023 semester and alumni contacted via email by MTSU’s Alumni Association.

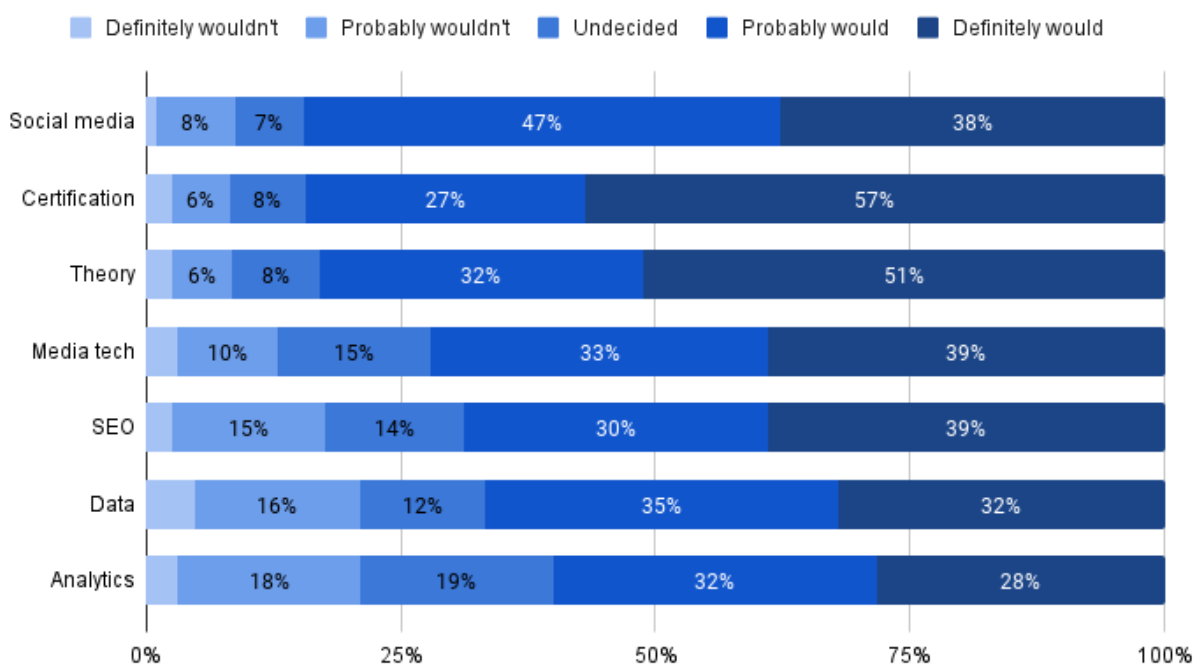
Of the 317 respondents, 230 (72%) were current students, and 88 (28%) were alumni. Their ages averaged to 27 years and ranged from 17 to 65. The standard deviation of 12 years reflected the distribution’s long right tail. Most respondents reported living in the Nashville/Murfreesboro area (69%), the Chattanooga area (5%), the Knoxville area (4%), the Memphis area (3%), or elsewhere in Tennessee (8%). Another 10% said they lived elsewhere in the U.S., and 1% said they lived outside the U.S.

Assessing program “attractiveness.” The survey measured the program’s “attractiveness” by assessing the appeal of its curriculum among survey respondents. Specifically, respondents read descriptions of seven types of courses the program will offer. For each type, they were asked to indicate, using a five-item ordinal response set, how much the course type would, or would not, attract them to the program. Available responses were “Definitely would attract me,” “Probably would attract me,” “Undecided,” “Probably would not attract me,” and “Definitely would not attract me.”²

The figure below shows the percentage of respondents choosing each answer for each type of course described.

Program attractiveness, by type of course

“Please indicate how much each kind of course listed below would, or would not, attract you to the program.”



Online survey of current students and recent alumni. N = 317. Data collected March 15 - April 20, 2023.

For each type of course described, strong majorities indicated that the course type either “probably would” or “definitely would” attract them to the program. With the “attractiveness” of each type of course re-expressed as a 0-4 continuous variable, summed across the course types, and converted to a percentage of the maximum possible value (28), the respondents expressed an average “attractiveness” score of 78%, with a range from 0% to 100% and a standard deviation of 23 percentage points. While “attractiveness” averaged high both among

² Exact question wordings and raw response summaries are available at: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScMrw6GnOI4EoFdYLOD4oSbHfzOUTXUox7Dh2aUD6uFXfLJTQ/viewanalytics>.

current students ($M = 76\%$, $SD = 23$) and among alumni ($M = 84\%$, $SD = 22$), the alumni average was significantly greater than the current student average $t(164) = 2.83$, $p = .01$.

The interest assessment did not include a question asking respondents whether they would enroll in the program once the program has launched. As illustrated by persistent discrepancies between proportions of U.S. adults who say they will vote and who actually do,³ survey-based predictions of future behavior are notoriously unreliable. Accordingly, the analysis focused on assessing the program's attractiveness among the School of Journalism and Strategic Media's current students and recent alumni.

Local and regional demand

The proposed program will appeal directly to workers in each of three media-related occupations designated as "in-demand" for the Northern Middle Tennessee region in the latest (2002) Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report⁴ produced jointly by THEC and three other Tennessee state agencies.

All three occupations have Standard Occupational Codes in the 27-0000 "Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations" range. They are Graphic Designers (27-1024), with 186 projected annual openings; Producers and Directors (27-2012), with 176 projected annual openings; and Editors (27-3041), with 129 projected annual openings. All three projections are for Northern Middle Tennessee through 2028. **In the same report**, the Graphic Designers occupation is listed as in-demand in the Southern Middle Tennessee region, with a projected 15 annual openings through 2023. The Northern Middle Tennessee projections came to 13 percent of total annual employment for Editors, 15 percent for Producers and Directors, and 17 percent for Graphic Designers - all within a standard deviation of the 16 percent average for the region's in-demand occupations.

As of 2020, the Northern Middle Tennessee region's employment concentration figure for Producers and Directors, 1.28, exceeded the national average of 1, as did the 1.49 concentration figure for Editors. The employment concentration figure for Graphic Designers in the region, .80, came close, falling well within a standard deviation of the region's average. Employment concentration for Graphic Designers in Southern Middle Tennessee was lower, at .48, but still within the considerably wider standard deviation for the region's average. Collectively, the evidence indicates considerable demand in the region for professionals with the expertise the proposed program will provide.

Regional projections are unavailable for other media-related occupations in the 27-0000 range, such as News Analysts, Reporters, and Journalists, Public Relations Specialists, Technical

³ Rentsch, A., Schaffner, B. F., & Gross, J. H. (2019). The elusive likely voter: Improving electoral predictions with more informed vote-propensity models. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 83(4), 782-804.

⁴ Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report 2022, <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/thec/research/supply-and-demand.html>.

Writers, and Writers and Authors. But the proposed program will serve professionals in these areas, too.

A master's degree is generally not required for any of the occupations in the 27-000 range. However, data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) suggests that obtaining a master's can substantially enhance one's chances of finding employment in the field and commanding higher pay. The association's dashboard for the class of 2021 shows that graduates with a bachelor's degree in the Communication & Media Studies field earned a mean starting salary of \$43,762 and achieved a 55.3 percent standard full-time employment rate. Those with a master's degree in the same area, however, earned a mean starting salary of \$60,052 and achieved a 67.1 percent standard full-time employment rate⁵.

Middle Tennessee residents who want advanced credentials for working in these occupations have limited options. In addition to Middle Tennessee State University, three higher-education institutions in the Middle Tennessee region offer degrees in Mass Communication / Media Studies (CIP Code 9.0102). The three are: Austin Peay State University, in Clarksville; and Trevecca Nazarene University and Belmont University, both in Nashville. According to IPEDS data for 2019 to 2021⁶, the four institutions awarded 476 Mass Communication / Media Studies degrees in 2019, 487 in 2020, and 421 in 2021. Master's degrees accounted for only 69 of these awards in 2019, 81 in 2020, and 73 in 2021. By themselves, the three in-demand media occupations described above will generate a projected 506 openings annually in the region, more than the annual number of undergraduate CIP Code 9.0201 degrees the region's higher-education institutions are producing, and far more than the number of such degrees at the master's level.

Clearly, the region's higher education market has room for this degree, a conclusion supported in a March 2022 analysis by Hanover Research⁷ that considered master's degree offerings not only at MTSU and its three competing regional media programs but also at East Tennessee State University, Lipscomb University, Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, University of Louisville, and Vanderbilt University. The analysis identified mass communication and media studies as one of Tennessee's 16 "high growth" areas of graduate education, characterized by a combination of above-average growth in student demand and above-average volume of degrees awarded.

Employer demand

Statewide, the latest data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects⁸ an average of 2,122 job openings per year through 2030 in media-related occupations that the proposed master's degree would serve. Five of these occupations -

⁵ First destinations for the college class of 2021. (n.d.). Default. Retrieved October 16, 2023, from <https://www.naceweb.org/job-market/graduate-outcomes/first-destination/class-of-2021/interactive-dashboard>.

⁶ IPEDS Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>.

⁷ Hanover Research (2022) *Interdisciplinary Program Opportunities*.

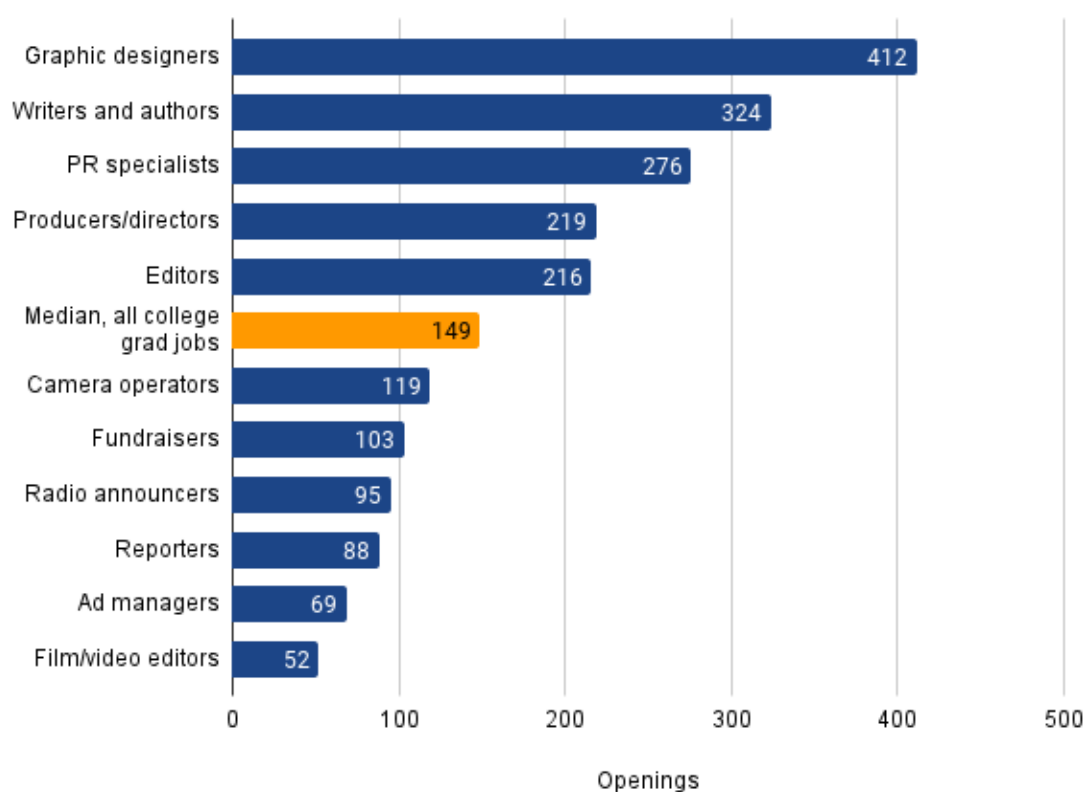
⁸ Jobs4TN.gov, <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.

graphic designers, writers and authors, PR specialists, producers and directors, and editors - are expected to produce annual openings above the statewide median for all jobs that typically require a four-year college degree.

Meanwhile, the latest national employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics⁹ predict 155,600 openings per year through 2031 in occupations that the proposed degree will serve. **Seven of them – public relations specialists, graphic designers, producers and directors, writers and authors, fundraisers, web developers, and editors - rank above the national median for annual openings in occupations that require college-level credentials.**

Annual Tenn. job openings for selected media careers, 2020-2030

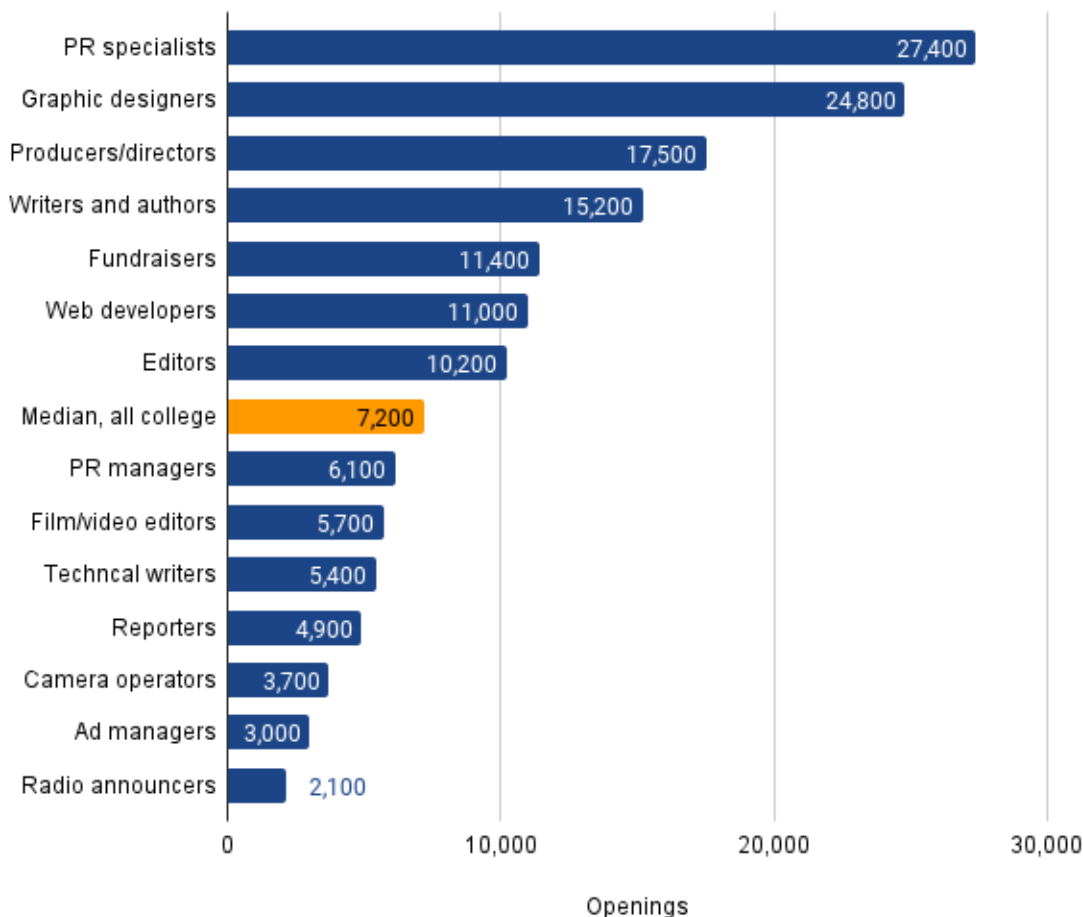
Data source: Tennessee Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development, <https://bit>.



⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections, Occupational Projections Data, <https://data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj>.

Annual U.S. job openings for selected media careers, 2021-2031

Data source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://bit.ly/3j8TIQG>



Community and industry partnerships

The response from local, regional, national, and international companies and organizations indicates strong support for the proposed Digital Media master's degree. Letters written by executives and leaders from news organizations, marketing and design firms, as well as non-profits and school systems demonstrate the wide-ranging employment opportunities available for graduates of this program.

In regard to employer demand for the degree, Joel Christopher, Executive Editor of Knox News and the Knoxville News Sentinel wrote:

“As you consider a master's degree program in digital media at Middle Tennessee State University, you can be confident that graduates of a program that builds these skills would be highly sought, especially by the newsrooms in

my company's network, which owns newsrooms in three of Tennessee's Big Four metros."

Courtney Chauvenne, Associate Director of Social Media at redpepper, a marketing agency that has worked with companies such as Verizon, Slack, and Cracker Barrel, demonstrated the importance of the skills students will learn in this degree, writing:

"I've had to rely on on-the-job training and self-study to learn the skills needed to succeed in this constantly evolving industry. In addition, I have witnessed significant changes in digital media since the early days of social networking websites like Myspace to the current social media phenomenon TikTok. This program will provide present-day students with a structured and comprehensive education—one that I wish was available to me when I started in this field. Therefore, I am delighted that MTSU students have the opportunity to benefit from this program's comprehensive curriculum."

The letters further establish a willingness for organizations to mentor and work with the proposed program's students before and after graduation. Ronald Roberts the Managing Partner for Finn Partners, which is the fourth largest independent marketing communications agency in the world and has its third-largest office in Nashville, wrote:

"Finn is a huge proponent of working with universities to provide internship opportunities for students. We believe everyone benefits from internships – the students, the university and Finn. We have hired many MTSU students as interns and plan to continue doing so. A student with a master's degree in digital media would be a great fit. I know that other companies/agencies in the Middle Tennessee area (as well as outside the area) look to local universities for employees. We also have members of our agency, including myself, that serve as mentors for students."

Appendix A includes letters of support from the following local, regional, national, and international businesses and organizations:

- Ronald Roberts, Managing Partner, Finn Partners
- Joel Christopher Executive Editor, Knox News and the Knoxville News Sentinel
- ~~Jaron Jackson, Digital Design Director, Nike Digital Marketing Platform~~
- Courtney Chauvenne, Associate Director of Social Media, redpepper
- Jessica Nerad, People Team Director, redpepper
- James Evans, Communications Director, Rutherford County Schools
- D'Anelle Desire, Communications Director, Tennessee Justice Center
- Kristen Swann, Vice President of Collective Impact and Strategic Initiatives, United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties
- Emily Brown, Managing Editor, Audience and Platforms, USA Today

Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

MTSU's recent adoption of 7-week course scheduling will allow the proposed M.S. in Digital Media to structure the proposed 30-credit-hour program so that students can complete it in a single calendar year. Each fall and spring semester, each student will be encouraged to enroll in 12 hours' worth of coursework, most likely two seven-week A1-term courses, and two more seven-week A2-term courses. Students will then be asked to finish their course work by enrolling in six hours of summer coursework. All courses will be three-credit-hour courses, regardless of the term in which they are offered. Thus, students who follow the recommended schedule will complete 12 credit hours in their first regular-term semester, 12 hours in their second regular-term semester, and six hours during a summer semester. Unlike the 36-hour M.S. in Media Communication, the proposed program will not require a thesis or a professional project.

The program will encourage students to enroll full time and follow the recommended schedule described above. Students will be permitted, however, to take classes only part-time and earn their degree across multiple years. Students also will be permitted to enroll in courses they want to take without seeking a degree, assuming they meet any course prerequisites or obtain the program director's permission to enroll.

Given the accelerated nature of the program's recommended schedule, each academic year's number of graduates will equal its number of incoming students, minus any students who opt to continue their studies into the next academic year, who complete only some courses without seeking a degree, or who enter the program planning to earn a degree but end up unable to do so and discontinuing their participation.

The best indicators of the proposed program's likely enrollment numbers and attrition rates may be the enrollment and attrition figures for the in-person, two-year Media and Communication master's program at MTSU. That program attracted 30 new students from 2017 to 2019 and awarded 25 degrees between 2019 and 2021, the period two years later. These numbers suggest a typical incoming class of about 10 students, a typical graduating class of about eight, and a typical attrition rate of about two in 10, or about 20 percent. The two in 10 students who did not earn a degree within two years could be part-time students, students who never intended to earn a degree, or students who intended to earn a degree but were unable to do so within two years.

If the proposed program can initially perform at least as well as the existing, in-person, two-year master's program, the proposed program can expect to attract an inaugural class of 10 students and graduate eight of them by the end of the first year. The results of the interest assessment suggest a strong market for the program, so enrollment is likely to increase as word about the program spreads. The Projected Enrollments and Graduates table below assumes, perhaps conservatively, that enrollment will grow by two students in its second year and by one student a year for its third, fourth and fifth years, with the attrition rate remaining at about 20 percent each year.

Projected Enrollments and Graduates					
Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Carryover/PT	Projected Graduates
1	2024-2025	10	2	1	7
2	2025-2026	12	2	2	8
3	2026-2027	13	3	2	8
4	2027-2028	14	3	2	9
5	2028-2029	15	3	2	10

Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

Expected projected costs necessary to deliver the proposed program (one-time and recurring expenditures) are discussed below. These costs are reflected in the [THEC Financial Projections Form](#) in Appendix B.

Faculty & Instructional Staff

The program would require no new faculty lines to administer the courses needed to serve the number of projected students. However, enrollments greater than those projected would require decisions about whether to cap enrollment at manageable levels or add one or more lines for tenure-track faculty capable of meeting graduate faculty teaching requirements. We have no basis currently for predicting higher enrollment levels. But it is possible we have underestimated the amount of interest the program will generate.

Non-Instructional Staff

We are requesting no additional non-instructional staff. The administrative assistant for the in-person master's in Media and Communication will also help administer this program.

Graduate Assistants

Given the fully online nature of this program, and the likelihood that most of its students will already be working at least part-time, we anticipate hiring no graduate teaching assistants.

Accreditation

Although this program will not be accredited, it will undergo an external program review under the [THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines](#) every seven years. Costs associated with this review are limited to approximately \$1,300 to cover the travel, lodging, per diem, and an honorarium. It is anticipated that the first review will happen in year four.

Consultants

As part of the THEC approval process, the program will require an external reviewer in the planning year, with a one-time cost estimated at \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend.

Equipment

No new equipment needs to be purchased for this program. The School of Journalism and Strategic media already supplies all equipment needed to facilitate online instruction and learning.

Information technology

There are no new information technology costs associated with this program. Everything needed for the program, including D2L and media-related software, are already covered under MTSU licenses.

Library resources

This program will require no new spending on library resources. The James E. Walker Library currently provides the scholarly resources, along with the expertise of the librarians and staff, necessary to support the proposed Digital Media master's degree. The library provides access to the top 10 communication journals ranked by Google Scholar's h5-index, a standard used by academics to assess journal quality.

Furthermore, the Walker Library collection has extensive resources available online with remote access. This includes 54,188 electronically available journals, 223,351 online government documents, and 1,303,718 e-books. The library also offers 121,437 streaming videos and 2,070 audio files. Students have access to more than 525 online databases.

Marketing

Marketing costs associated with the program will be \$10,000 in the first year of the program, and \$1,000 each additional year. As this Digital Media master's program will provide an in-demand degree, delivered online, a wider-ranging marketing campaign will attract students beyond the Middle Tennessee area. The feasibility study conducted for this proposed degree demonstrated interest in this degree outside of the Middle Tennessee region. Among respondents to the student and alumni questionnaire, interest averaged slightly higher (80 out of 100) among people living outside of Middle Tennessee than among people living inside of Middle Tennessee (77 out of 100). The difference was not statistically significant, but that merely means that interest in the proposed degree was high both in Middle Tennessee and elsewhere. This marketing budget will allow for the degree program to advertise to a wider audience through local and regional search engine optimization (SEO), Google ads, targeted social media advertising, and email marketing.

Facilities

No new facilities will be required for this master's degree. Faculty and administration are already supported in existing buildings, and students will be online.

Travel

No new travel expenses are expected for this program. Faculty-related travel is already covered through current funding.

Other resources

None.

Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program

Tuition

Using the 2022/2023 Academic Year figures for in-state graduate tuition and program service fees¹⁰ as a guide, we estimate the proposed program will bring in the following tuition totals each year:

Year 1: \$163,500

Year 2: \$196,200

Year 3: \$212,550

Year 4: \$228,900

Year 5: \$243,447

Grants

We anticipate no revenue from grants.

Other

We anticipate no other revenue sources.

Response to public comments receive from ETSU:

We thank Prof. Gregory Marlow, graduate coordinator for East Tennessee State University's Department of Digital Media, for his remarks. We respectfully disagree, however, with each of his three main assertions, which are that:

- "Digital media" programs are more appropriately classified under CIP code 10.0304 than under CIP code 09.0102.
- The phrase "digital media" pertains solely to creative endeavors rather than to scholarly pursuits
- Allowing both his program and ours to use the phrase "digital media" in their titles could confuse potential students.

First, we would point out that the phrase "digital media" appears nowhere in the title or definition of CIP code 10.0304. The code's title reads, "Animation, Interactive Technology, Video Graphics, and Special Effects," and the code's definition reads:

A program that prepares individuals to use computer applications and related visual and sound imaging techniques to manipulate images and information originating as film, video, still photographs, digital copy, soundtracks, and physical objects in order to communicate messages simulating real-world content. Includes instruction in specialized camerawork and equipment operation and maintenance, image capture, computer

¹⁰ *Graduate Registration and Other Fees*. Downloaded 25 April 2023 from https://www.mtsu.edu/tuition/forms/22-23_Graduate.pdf.

programming, dubbing, CAD applications, and applications to specific commercial, industrial, and entertainment needs.

Of course, the phrase “digital media” also appears nowhere in the title or definition of our chosen CIP code, 09.0102. The title reads, “Mass Communication / Media Studies,” and the definition reads:

A program that focuses on the analysis and criticism of media institutions and media texts, how people experience and understand media content, and the roles of media in producing and transforming culture. Includes instruction in communications regulation, law, and policy; media history; media aesthetics, interpretation, and criticism; the social and cultural effects of mass media; cultural studies; the economics of media industries; visual and media literacy; and the psychology and behavioral aspects of media messages, interpretation, and utilization.

But we find in this mutual absence no reason to consider one code more appropriate than the other for categorizing a digital media program.

Second, we consider the term “digital media” broad enough to encompass both creative work and academic scholarship. Prof. Marlow bases his argument for a narrower, exclusively production-oriented interpretation partly on an assertion that the International Digital Media and Arts Association backs his department’s notion that “digital media” refers to “the creative process rather than the study of media.” This characterization seems at odds, however, with the organization's description of itself. The second line of the organization’s “About iDMAa” page¹¹ asserts that the organization “is dedicated to serving educators, practitioners, *scholars*, and organizations with interests in digital media.” The next line on the same page praises universities and colleges around the world that are “creating new programs and departments to teach *and conduct research in* Digital Media and Digital Arts.”

Meanwhile, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, which traces its history to 1912, 92 years before the 2004 founding of iDMAa, also regards “digital media” as a field of both practical skills and scholarly inquiry. The oldest of AEJMC’s scholarly journals, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, has published more than 300 articles with the subject tag, “digital media,” according to the MTSU Walker Library’s JEWL search engine. The earliest appeared in 1997. Like the broader field of media and communication, the digital media area includes both practitioners and scholars.

Finally, we doubt potential graduate students will easily or frequently confuse the focus and scope of ETSU’s MFA in Digital Media with the focus and scope of MTSU’s MS in Digital Media. If the “fine arts” and “science” degree designations don’t signal the differences, a cursory comparison of the course offerings surely will. ETSU’s program offers concentrations in

¹¹ About iDMAa. (n.d.). Idmaa.org. Retrieved October 16, 2023, from <https://idmaa.org/about-us/about-idmaa/>.

animation, game design, visual effects, and visualization. MTSU's proposed program will offer courses in social media strategy, search engine optimization, quantitative and qualitative research methodology, and media communication theory. We applaud ETSU as a pioneer in offering postsecondary digital media education in Tennessee. But the greater risk for confusion, in our view, would come from suggesting to graduate-caliber media students in Tennessee that the only things to be learned about digital media are those that ETSU's program teaches.

Section VII: Implementation Timeline

- Accreditation considerations and timeline for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC): July 1, 2024.
- Accreditation considerations and timeline for professional disciplinary accreditation organizations: N/A.
- Proposed dates for the external review site visit: August/September 2024.
- Estimated date of submission of the external review report to THEC and the institution (within 30 days after the site visit): September/October 2024.
- Estimated date of institution's response to external review (within 30 days upon receipt of external reviewer report): October/November 2024.
- Proposed date of institutional governing board's meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval: December 2024.
- Proposed date of the THEC meeting for the academic program to be considered for Commission approval: January 2025.
- Proposed implementation date when students will enroll in the proposed academic program: May 2025.

Section VIII: Curriculum

Program-Specific Goals and Objectives

Provide the program-specific goals/objectives for the proposed program. Goals/objectives should represent planned outcomes for the proposed program and include a plan for assessment of these goals/objectives.

The proposed MSDM will allow students currently working in media to update and expand their expertise in social media, digital analytics, communication technologies, data journalism, media theory, and applied research methods. It will also allow students with degrees in other fields to become more familiar with digital media practices.

Program outcomes include producing students who have mastered:

1. Social media best practices, such as gathering and interpreting audience metrics and creating mobile-optimized content.
2. Practical and theoretical concepts behind effective communication on various digital media platforms, like search engine optimization (SEO) and website creation, design, and management.
3. Concepts and techniques for conducting valid, reliable, reproducible digital data collection and analysis.
4. The basics of a coding language suitable for the analysis and visualization of

- data, including geospatial data.
5. The ability to reason theoretically based on a synthesis of findings in scholarly media communication research.

Student Learning Outcomes

Outline the student learning outcomes for the proposed program. Outcomes should clearly state the specific and measurable outcomes students will display to verify learning has occurred and include information regarding how each student learning outcome will be assessed.

The following table outlines student learning outcomes along with the associated program learning outcomes detailed above. Student learning outcomes will be assessed through coursework and key assignments and during the external program review, described below, conducted every seven years in accordance with the [THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines](#).

Student Learning Outcome	Program Outcome #
Identify best practices and emerging trends on various social media platforms.	1, 2, 4, 5
Recognize and communicate various approaches to website management.	2, 5
Design and execute projects involving digital data collection and analysis.	1, 3, 4
Recognize legal and ethical issues facing digital media practitioners.	1, 2, 3, 5
Produce valid, reliable, and operational computer code for detecting and visualizing patterns in a dataset.	3, 4, 5
Research and write a clear, concise summary of current scholarly knowledge about a given media-related phenomenon.	3, 4, 5
Devise a theory-based research question or hypothesis and a qualitative and/or quantitative methodology for investigating it.	3, 4, 5

Academic Program Requirements

Include the required number of semester credit hours (SCH), courses (course prefix and number, title, SCH), and any special requirements including thesis, internships, practicum, etc.

The non-thesis program will consist of 30 hours of coursework, which will be delivered fully online. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher to graduate. The courses included in the program are as follows:

Course	Title	SCH
MC 5240	Television, Culture, and History	3
MC 5350	Children and Media	3
MC 6000	The Science of Communication	3
MC 6010	Cultural Studies in Communication	3
MC 6240	Social Media	3
MC 6270	Public Relations Storytelling	3
MC 6300	Media Law and Ethics	3
MC 6380	News, Culture, and Democracy	3
MC 6400	Communication and Technology	3
MC 6410	Global Culture and Communication	3

Existing and New Courses

List existing and new courses for the proposed academic program including a catalog description and credit hours for each course. Include syllabi for all [existing] courses as an Appendix to the NAPP.

The following table includes all the courses that will be included in the proposed courses. All courses currently exist. Syllabi for all courses are included in the appendix.

EXISTING COURSES				
Prefix	Number	Title	Course Catalog Description	SCH
MC	5240	Television, Culture, and History	Examines television and streaming video as a cultural product, communication tool, “mirror on the	3

			world,” and as an agent for social change. Explores censorship, sponsorship, ethics, and the impact of context on content. Uses a critical and cultural studies lens to examine the area of television studies. Studies role that television has had and continues to have on constructing notions of gender, race, class, and difference.	
MC	5350	Children and Media	Explores media content created for and by children, examining the many ways that graphic novels, music, social media, videos, and other forms of media influence the way that kids see the world. Topics include the history of the child consumer, children’s marketing, ethics in children’s media, constructions of gender, race, ability, and other positions of intersectionality, role-playing, identity, and video games, and other salient topics in this area.	3
MC	6000	The Science of Communication	Quantitative and qualitative research dealing with the uses and effects of mass communication.	3
MC	6010	Cultural Studies in Communication	Relationship of communication to culture with particular emphasis on the everyday life contexts of media audiences.	3
MC	6240	Social Media	Develops a broad understanding of both applied social media skills (content creation to social analytics) and the underlying social science theories that ground social media.	3
MC	6270	Public Relations Storytelling	Introducing the art of storytelling and its use in strategic messaging for public relations. Successful messages must captivate target audiences before they can persuade, and this course identifies the theories and structures necessary for compelling narratives.	3

MC	6300	Media Law and Ethics	An overview of the laws relating to the media. Ethical and social dimensions of law. Emphasis on case studies.	3
MC	6380	News, Culture, and Democracy	Prerequisite: MC 6010. Critical examination of the news process with attention to the relationship of economic, cultural, and political constraints.	3
MC	6400	Communication and Technology	Readings in the cultural history of media technology explore technological change and social development as a system of interrelated social relations and practices.	3
MC	6410	Global Culture and Communication	The seminar is designed to critically engage with various historical and theoretical perspectives on globalization. Themes include significant developments in culture, communications, and media, vis-à-vis the processes of globalization. Studies how global media flows and digital media are reshaping some of our fundamental ideas of communication and culture.	3

Program of Study

Provide a program of study for full-time students enrolled in the program. The program of study should include all courses listed by semester necessary for students to complete the proposed program.

Fall Semester:

- MC 6010: Cultural Studies in Communication
- MC 6240: Social Media
- MC 6400: Communication and Technology

Winter session:

- MC 5350: Children and Media

Spring semester:

- MC 6270: Public Relations Storytelling

- MC 6000: The Science of Communication
- MC 6380: News, Culture, and Democracy
- MC 6410: Global Culture and Communication

Summer term:

- MC 5240: Television, Culture, and History
- MC 6300: Media Law and Ethics

Assessment and Evaluation

Identify who will be responsible for conducting program assessments and evaluations.

The School of Journalism and Strategic Media (SoJSM) Graduate Program Director will be responsible for coordinating program assessments. The director will also review course evaluations. The SoJSM graduate faculty meets regularly to review program assessment and evaluation documents and will implement any needed changes.

Although this program will not be programmatically accredited, it will undergo an external program review under the [THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines](#) every seven years. The SoJSM graduate director, along with the graduate faculty, will coordinate these reviews.

Articulation and Transfer

For proposed bachelor's programs, indicate all Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTP) that may be acceptable for entry into the proposed program and provide a sample degree plan for transfer students.

Not applicable, this is not a bachelor's degree program.

Section IX: Students

Academic Standards

Clearly state the admission, retention, and graduation standards, which should align with institutional or governing board policy.

The requirements discussed below align with present admission, retention and graduation requirements for MTSU's in-person M.S. in Media and Communication and College of Graduate Studies. The only variation is the M.S. Digital Media degree's lack of a thesis or professional project requirement.

Admission will require an earned bachelor's degree from an accredited university or college and an overall undergraduate grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.00 scale. Applicants will be required to submit an official transcript of all previous postsecondary academic work, a 500-word application essay and the names and contact information of three references. Students will be permitted to take up to six hours before being admitted to the program but will have to do so

as non-degree seeking students. Enrollment in these hours will require the permission of the graduate director.

Retention will require students to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale for all graduate work completed at MTSU as well as in the major. Six semester hours of C grade (C+, C, or C-) or higher coursework may be applied toward the degree; however, all grades will be included in calculation of cumulative GPA. Students will be required to reapply for admission if they miss one or more semesters, excluding summers, regardless of the reason. If admission requirements have changed since their initial admission, students applying for readmission will have to meet the new requirements. A student failing to meet the applicable minimum cumulative graduate GPA retention standard will be placed on academic probation for the subsequent term. Probation in itself has no serious consequences other than to alert the student of potential academic problems and the requirement to (re)establish satisfactory academic status. Once on probation, a student has three consecutive semesters in which to restore the cumulative GPA to the minimum required. If the student fails to attain the required GPA at the close of the third semester of probation, the student will be suspended automatically. A graduate student who is placed on academic probation, then returns to good standing will no longer be on probation. Should the student once again fall below the minimum cumulative graduate GPA for retention during the course of study, the student will be suspended. To re-enroll, a student must formally appeal the suspension to the program director. If a student who is granted permission to re-enroll subsequently fails to maintain the minimum cumulative GPA, there will be no second probationary period. The student will be terminated at the close of the semester and no longer eligible for matriculation. Students whose appeals are denied by the program director will have the right to appeal the director's decision by notifying the dean of the College of Graduate Studies in writing by the first week of the term following their suspension. The decision by the College of Graduate Studies will be final.

Graduation will require completing 30 hours of course work and a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. Students will have six years from the initial semester of matriculation to complete all program requirements. Exceptions to the time limit, for good cause, will be considered by the dean of the College of Graduate Studies. Exception requests must be submitted in writing with a proposed timeline for completion and recommendations from the student's academic adviser and the graduate program's director.

Marketing and Recruitment

Provide a plan that outlines how the proposed program will market and recruit a diverse population of students including underserved and historically underrepresented students and is aligned with the proposed implementation timeline.

- The online nature of this program, coupled with a robust plan to market this degree, allow for several opportunities to recruit a diverse population of students. Students can be located anywhere, including rural areas, and still enroll in the program.
- As described in the LON, the program will spend \$3,600 (an average of \$300/month) during the planning year to invest in marketing materials (e.g., print collateral, brochures, swag), as well as social media advertising to create awareness of the program and encourage applications. In Year 1, marketing costs will increase to \$6,000 to invest in additional digital advertising designed to increase awareness and enrollment. After the initial push in Year 1, the program

will continue to advertise, but at an investment of \$3,000 per year. In Year 5, marketing costs will increase slightly to cover the costs of additional promotional placements to highlight and showcase any fifth anniversary announcements and/or events, etc.

- Beyond more traditional routes of advertising, the School of Journalism and Strategic Media will reach out to industry partners, as well as professional organizations (e.g., National Association of Black Journalists, Public Relations Society of America, Asian American Journalists Association) to market the program.

Student Support Services

Provide an overview of student support services that will be available to all students in the proposed program (e.g., academic advising, tutoring, internship placement, career counseling, or others).

- Students enrolled in this program will receive support services at the program, college, and university level.
- At the program level, the director will be the primary contact for students concerning advising, career counseling, and internship placement. However, students will also have access to faculty in the program, who all have experience and contacts within the industry to provide additional guidance. The School of Journalism and Strategic Media further offers tutoring specific to journalism and media courses throughout the academic year.
- The College of Media & Entertainment has a dedicated advising center which provides career advising, professional development guides, and internship opportunities. The College also hosts career fairs specific to the media industry.
- At the university level, MTSU's Career Development Center provides career advising, job support, résumé review, and other services to students. MTSU's Counseling Services offers mental health support, including counseling, crisis services, and referrals.

Section X: Instructional and Administrative Resources

Current and anticipated faculty resources should ensure a program of high quality. The number and qualification of faculty should meet existing institutional standards and should be consistent with external standards.

Current Faculty

Provide a list of current faculty, including primary department, highest degree earned, and describe how they will support the proposed program (time devoted to the program, administrative responsibilities, etc.).

Currently, there are 14 faculty members in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media who have teaching and/or full graduate faculty status. It is likely that all will rotate through teaching courses in the proposed Digital Media master's degree. The percentage of time provided is a general estimate based on teaching one class per year in the program, with the exception of the school and graduate program directors, who will have additional administrative duties.

Faculty Name	Highest Degree	Rank	Primary Department	FT/PT	% of Time Devoted

					to Program
Jason B. Reineke*	Ph.D., Communication	Associate Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	30%
Katie Foss**	Ph.D., Mass Communication	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	20%
Sanjay Asthana	Ph.D., Journalism and Mass Communication	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Chris Bacon	Ph.D., Mass Communications	Associate Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Ken R. Blake	Ph.D., Mass Communication/ Media Studies	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Larry L. Burriss	Ph.D., Communication	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Sally Ann Cruikshank	Ph.D., Mass Communication	Associate Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Christine C. Eschenfelder	Ph.D., Journalism & Communication	Associate Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Andrea E. Hall	Ph.D., Mass Communication	Assistant Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Leslie G. Haines	M.F.A., Visual Arts	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Greg Pitts	Ph.D., Communications	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Matthew P. Taylor	Ph.D., Journalism & Mass Communication	Assistant Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
Jennifer Bailey Woodard	Ph.D., Mass Communications	Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%

Jun Zhang	Ph.D., Mass Communications	Assistant Professor	School of Journalism & Strategic Media	Full	10%
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* School of Journalism and Strategic Media Graduate Program Director

** School of Journalism and Strategic Media Director

Anticipated New Faculty and Instructional Staff

Describe the additional faculty needed during the next five years for the initiation of the program and list the anticipated schedule for addition of these faculty members.

MTSU does not anticipate any new faculty and instructional staff positions for this program. However, if enrollment grew beyond what is projected, it would require decisions about whether to cap enrollment at manageable levels or add one or more lines for tenure-track faculty capable of meeting graduate faculty teaching requirements.

Non-Instructional staff

Provide a list of anticipated non-instructional staff positions required along with a narrative of how these positions will support the new program.

No new non-instructional staff are needed for this program. The administrative assistant for the programs in-person M.S. in Media and Communication will also help administer this program.

Section XI: Resources

Equipment

Assess the adequacy of the existing equipment available for the proposed academic program. Include physical equipment, computer facilities, special classrooms, etc.

No new equipment needs to be purchased for this program. The School of Journalism and Strategic media already supplies all equipment needed to facilitate online instruction and learning. No change from LON.

Information Technology

Describe current information technology resources available to support the program.

There are no new information technology costs associated with this program. Everything needed for the program, including D2L and media-related software, are already covered under MTSU licenses. No change from LON.

Library Resources

Provide an overview of the current library resources available to support the proposed program. This might include a summary or listing of the appropriate monographs, serials, databases, and online resources that are held by the campus of college libraries to support the proposed program.

This program will require no new spending on library resources. The James E. Walker Library currently provides the scholarly resources, along with the expertise of the librarians and staff, necessary to support the proposed Digital Media master's degree. The library provides access to the top 10 communication journals ranked by Google Scholar's h5-index, a standard used by academics to assess journal quality.

The Walker Library collection has extensive resources available online with remote access. This includes 54,188 electronically available journals, 223,351 online government documents, and 1,303,718 e-books. The library also offers 121,437 streaming videos and 2,070 audio files. Students have access to more than 525 online databases. No change from LON.

Facilities

Describe facilities that will support the proposed program. For existing space and facilities, briefly describe the type(s) of space and facilities (e.g., a listing of the number and types of classrooms or labs, student offices or spaces, etc.).

The program will be supported by already existing facilities, including administrative offices and faculty offices. We have 14 faculty, and each has an office. The library's online collection will also support students in the program. As this is a fully online degree, no physical facilities are needed for students. No new facilities will be required for this master's degree. No change from LON.

Other Resources

Describe other support resources available to support the program.

Accreditation - Although this program will not be accredited, it will undergo an external program review under the [THEC and Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools guidelines](#) every seven years. Costs associated with this review are limited to approximately \$1,300 to cover the travel, lodging, per diem, and an honorarium. It is anticipated that the first review will happen in year four. No change from LON.

Consultants – As part of the THEC approval process, the program will require an external reviewer in the planning year, with a one-time cost of \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend. Added to Revised LON.

Marketing - Marketing costs associated with the program will be \$10,000 in the first year of the program, and \$1,000 each additional year. As this Digital Media master's program will provide an in-demand degree, delivered online, a wider-ranging marketing campaign will attract students beyond the Middle Tennessee area. The feasibility study conducted for this proposed degree demonstrated interest in this degree outside of the Middle Tennessee region. Among respondents to the student and alumni questionnaire, interest averaged slightly higher (80 out of 100) among people living outside of Middle Tennessee than among people living inside of Middle Tennessee (77 out of 100). The difference was not statistically significant, but that merely means that interest in the proposed degree was high both in Middle Tennessee and elsewhere. This marketing budget will allow for the degree program to advertise to a wider audience through

local and regional search engine optimization (SEO), Google ads, targeted social media advertising, and email marketing. No change from LON.



PARTNERS

April 27, 2023

Robert Smith
Interim Executive Director
TN Higher Education Commission

Mr. Smith:

Hello. I am Ronald Roberts, Managing Partner for Finn Partners – the fourth largest independent marketing communications agency in the world. Finn’s headquarters are in New York, and I lead our Nashville Office (the third largest office in the agency). This letter is regarding approval of the fully online Master of Science in Digital Media program being proposed by the School of Journalism and Strategic Media at Middle Tennessee State University.

I have been in the communications industry for almost 40 years and have seen a lot of change. One of the most recent and impactful is the growth of digital media across the communications landscape. Digital media is not just a “specialty” or “niche” skill. Digital media expertise is a necessity in developing comprehensive and successful communications programs.

Our office provides PR, advertising, integrated marketing (digital and creative), and media (placement and buying) support for our clients – clients that include Bridgestone, Jack Daniel’s Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and Mazda. Our integrated marketing division is our fastest growing. More and more clients recognize the need and the challenge of either remaining relevant, building their brand, or generating awareness. We are constantly looking for talented practitioners in the digital field that are ready to hit the ground running. From a hiring standpoint, our biggest challenge is finding people with those skills. This proposed program will be beneficial to our agencies and others looking for talent.

Finn is a huge proponent of working with universities to provide internship opportunities for students. We believe everyone benefits from internships – the students, the university and Finn. We have hired many MTSU students as interns and plan to continue doing so. A student with a master’s degree in digital media would be a great fit. I know that other companies/agencies in the Middle Tennessee area (as well as outside the area) look to local universities for employees.

We also have members of our agency, including myself, that serve as mentors for students. The combination of faculty expertise and industry knowledge provides students with a great foundation as they prepare for their careers.

I fully support the School of Journalism and Strategic Media proposal and hope you do the same. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald Roberts".

Ronald Roberts
Managing Partner, Finn Partners

April 21, 2023

Dear Robert Smith, Interim Executive Director
TN Higher Education Commission,

I'm writing in support of a master's degree program for Digital Media at MTSU. In my career as a journalist, and specifically now as Managing Editor for Audience and Platforms at USA TODAY, I can testify to the importance of understanding social media best practices, search engine optimization, audience metrics, digital data collection and analysis, website creation and management and mobile-optimized content creation. Paired with the fundamentals of strong journalism, these skills will make for a well-rounded and exciting job candidate.

The media industry has changed dramatically in the last 20 years and will only continue to evolve. A master's degree in Digital Media from MTSU can fill in the knowledge gaps in this fast-moving industry. We need smart thinkers studying and bringing attention to the problems and solutions that can keep media and journalism thriving and safe from the harm of disinformation. Higher education and the program designed for MTSU is a perfect incubator for those solutions.

A job candidate with the skills outlined in the MTSU program would be incredibly attractive to me as a hiring manager. Often, these skills are learned on the job, which takes an incredible amount of time while also managing other responsibilities. A job candidate walking in with this level of knowledge would benefit my team and should land them opportunities for advancement and higher salary.

Sincerely,

Emily Brown
Managing Editor, Audience and Platforms



Robert Smith, Interim Executive Director
TN Higher Education Commission
Nashville, TN 37243

May 5, 2023

Executive Director Robert Smith,

As someone who is responsible for hiring the future of this industry, I couldn't resist sharing my excitement for the proposed master's degree in Digital Media at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). This degree is a game-changer for aspiring professionals in the advertising industry, and I'm here to spill the tea on why it's a must-have for our industry.

The digital landscape is evolving fast. To navigate this wild ride, we need experts in Digital Media now. MTSU's master's degree program could do just that, equipping students with practical skills and hands-on experience that will impress any Talent or HR team. This degree would unlock the mysteries of digital marketing strategies, content creation, data analysis, and all things tech-tastic. It will prepare graduates to be armed for these very sought roles.

This degree isn't just about individuals; it's about boosting the entire industry. The advertising/marketing world is craving digital media mavens. MTSU's program will supply the industry with a fresh batch of individuals who can keep up with the ever-changing digital dance, on which some ad agencies have their eyes expressly set. These graduates will swoop in, armed with specialized knowledge, practical experience, and the power to make strategy dreams come true.

To wrap this up with a pretty little bow, the proposed master's degree in Digital Media from MTSU is a golden ticket. It's an opportunity for a digital wonderland where dreams come true, and success is just a click away. As the HR Director, I wholeheartedly endorse this degree and urge you to seize this chance. Thank you for your time.

Cheers!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Nerad".

Jessica Nerad, PHR
People Team Director



Dr. James Sullivan
Director of Schools

Rutherford County Board of Education

2240 Southpark Drive, Murfreesboro, TN 37128 Phone: 615.893.5812 www.rcschools.net

April 21, 2023

Robert Smith, Interim Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa Parks Avenue, 9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Mr. Smith,

About 18 months ago, we were searching for a communications specialist to serve in my department at Rutherford County Schools.

We interviewed several fine applicants, and while many of them had pieces of the skills needed for the job, no one contained all of them. Fortunately, we were eventually able to find a great candidate, but the situation illustrated the desperate need for a new type of advanced media training in education.

So when Dr. Ken Blake with the School of Journalism and Strategic Media at Middle Tennessee State University solicited a letter of support from me for the proposed Master's of Science in Digital Media, I enthusiastically agreed to do so.

This type of advanced degree will help merge the skills of those with a background in public relations, advertising, journalism, marketing, social media and other related fields. Modern journalists must wield skills from all of these professions in order to operate in a society where multiple online and digital mediums are used to absorb, communicate, and interact with information.

As the communications director for Rutherford County Schools — the fourth largest school district in Tennessee — I would be very interested in interviewing graduates of such a program, and I would love to serve in an advisory capacity to review course content and methodology.

If I can help provide any additional information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



James Evans, Communications Director
Rutherford County Schools

"Investing in Our Students for Tomorrow's Possibilities"



P.O. Box 100187, Nashville, TN 37224

Phone: (615)255-0331 Fax: (615)255-0354

e-mail: info@tnjustice.org website: www.tnjustice.org

May 3, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

As the Communications Director at TJC, I am writing to express my full support of the new Master's Degree in Digital Media at Middle Tennessee State University. With my position and knowledge of the industry, I understand the importance and value of a this program, especially in today's digital age.

As technology continues to rapidly advance, the need for well-educated digital media professionals is on the rise. I believe that this new degree program at MTSU can help to fill that gap by providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the industry. I understand this digital media program to be a deeper dive into specialized areas like social media marketing, video production, web design, and more. With that, I believe that MTSU will produce graduates who are ready to make an immediate and valuable contribution to the media industry.

At TJC, we are always interested in hiring talented individuals with advanced degrees in Digital Media and a master's degree in this field would provide candidates with a competitive edge in the job market. We are confident that graduates of MTSU's Master's in Digital Media program will have the expertise we are looking for in our team members.

I fully support the new Master's Degree in Digital Media at MTSU and would encourage individuals interested in pursuing a career in digital media to consider this program.

Sincerely,

D'Anelle Desire

Communications Director

Tennessee Justice Center

Robert Smith, Interim Executive Director
TN Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa Parks Ave, 9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing in support of the fully online Master's in Digital Media at the MTSU School of Journalism and Strategic Media.

Tentatively planned for a Fall 2024 launch, the 30-hour, fully online master's program would allow students to update and expand their expertise in social media, digital analytics, communication technologies, data journalism, media theory, applied research methods, and more. Offered alongside the in-person Master of Science in Media Communication, the proposed program would attract people interested in public relations, advertising, journalism and related fields and who need the flexibility of online coursework.

As a graduate of MTSU's Master of Science in Media Communication, I fully support this proposed program as a valuable opportunity for any communication professional.

United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties is willing to offer internship and mentor opportunities to students, pass along job opportunities in our organization and our vast network of local nonprofits, and review course content and suggest improvements when needed.

We are happy to support this new program in any way that we can, and look forward to MTSU offering valuable education opportunities in our community.

Sincerely,



Kristen Swann
Vice President of Collective Impact and Strategic Initiatives
United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties



**United Way of Rutherford
& Cannon Counties**

**P.O. Box 330056
Murfreesboro, TN 37133**

**P: 615-893-7303
F: 615-849-5909**

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Dr. Gloria Bonner
Billy Bruce
Buffy Bundshuh
Dr. James Calder
Patrick Cammack
Courtney Chavez
Don Clayton
Carolyn Cox
Dr. Trey Duke
James Evans
Beth Goodner
Fred Halfpap
Lauren Herald
Deb Insell
Gernell Jenkins
Chris Jones
James McCarroll
Casey Rainey
Ronald Roberts
Thomas Roddy
Jason Schmitt
Robin Seay
Dr. Ellen Slicker
Rick Smith
Ashley Stearns
Matthew Stump
Brian Sullivan
Kasey Talbott
Deb Thompson
Martha Tolbert
Diane Turnham
Natalie Whitmer



Financial Projections Form

Institution: Middle Tennessee State

Program Name: MS in Digital Media

Projected One-Time Expenditures

Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff						
Non-Instructional Staff						
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation						
Consultants	\$4,000					
Equipment						
Information Technology						
Library resources						
Marketing						
Facilities						
Travel						
Other						
Total One-Time Expenditures	\$4,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Projected Recurring Expenditures

Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Non-Instructional Staff						
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation					\$1,300	
Consultants	\$4,000					
Equipment						
Information Technology						
Library						
Marketing	\$0	\$10,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Facilities						
Travel						
Other						
Total Recurring Expenditures	\$4,000	\$10,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,300	\$1,000
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,300	\$1,000

Projected Revenue

Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition		\$163,500	\$196,200	\$212,550	\$228,900	\$243,447
Grants		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenues	\$0	\$163,500	\$196,200	\$212,550	\$228,900	\$243,447

**Years 6 and 7 should only be included for doctoral programs*



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **Approval of New Academic Program
M.S. in Legal Studies**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The **M.S. in Legal Studies** is primarily in the Jones College of Business (with one concentration provided by the College of Media and Entertainment). It is 30 credit hours with a hybrid delivery of online and on-ground courses. Eight hours will be taught by faculty at Nashville School of Law and transferred to MTSU to complete the degree. Initially approved by the MTSU Board of Trustees in December 2022, the degree will be marketed to working professionals who want to sharpen their understanding of the law but do not need to pursue a JD to achieve their career goals. The external reviewer is scheduled for an on-site visit in mid-November. We will respond to the external reviewer's report in January and expect to be scheduled for THEC's Winter or Spring meeting.

A New Academic Program Proposal is attached for review and approval.



NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL (NAPP)

M.S. in Legal Studies

Table of Contents	
Section	Page Numbers
Section VII: Implementation Timeline	2
Section VIII: Curriculum	2-
Program-Specific Goals/Objectives	2
Student Learning Outcomes	3
Academic Program Requirements	3-6
Existing and New Courses	6-12
Program of Study	13-14
Assessment and Evaluation	14
Articulation and Transfer	14
Section IX: Students	14-16
Academic Standards	14-15
Marketing and Recruitment	15
Student Support Services	16
Section X: Instructional and Administrative Resources	16-18
Current Faculty	16-17
Anticipated New Faculty and Instructional Staff	17-18
Non-Instructional Staff	18
Section XI: Resources	18-21
Equipment	18-19
Information Technology	19
Library Resources	19-21
Marketing	21
Other Resources	21
Appendix A: Letters of Support	22-24
AllianceBernstein	22
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce	23
Nashville School of Law	24
Appendix B: Updated THEC Financial Projections Form	25
Appendix C: Faculty CVs	26-77
Appendix D: Course Syllabi	78-275

Section VII – Implementation Timeline

Proposed notification to SACSCOC: July 1, 2024

Professional Disciplinary Accreditation: MTSU’s Jones College of Business is accredited by AACSB International – the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. The M.S. in Legal Studies will become one of the programs evaluated through the AACSB reaffirmation process in 2026-27. N/A

Proposed dates for external review site visit: September 2024

Estimated date of submission of the external review report to THEC and the institution: October 2024

Estimated date of institution’s response to external review: November 2024

Proposed date of institutional governing board’s meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval: December 2024

Proposed date of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval: January 2025

Proposed implementation date when students will enroll in the proposed academic program: May 2025

Section VIII - Curriculum

Program-Specific Goals and Objectives

Provide the program-specific goals/objectives for the proposed program. Goals/objectives should represent planned outcomes for the proposed program and include a plan for assessment of these goals/objectives.

The proposed MSLS will:

- Prepare working professionals who need to sharpen their understanding of the law but do not need or want to pursue a more extensive Juris Doctor (JD) degree with relevant knowledge of the U.S. legal system and basic legal principles in the general areas of contracts, critical legal thinking, legal ethics, writing and case analysis
- Allow students to develop in-depth knowledge in one of three concentrations: Business Law; Compliance, Anti-Fraud, and Anti-Money Laundering; or Entertainment.

The program objectives will be assessed in the Professional Project courses (BLAW 6xxx Professional Project and RIM 6xxx Professional Project). Students will take this course in their final semester. The project will require students to demonstrate knowledge gained in the general areas of contracts, critical legal thinking, legal ethics, writing and case analysis as well as demonstrate in-depth knowledge in topics related to their selected concentration.

Student Learning Outcomes

Outline the student learning outcomes for the proposed program. Outcomes should clearly state the specific and measurable outcomes students will display to verify learning has occurred and include information regarding how each student learning outcome will be assessed.

Graduates of the MSLS will demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of the basic functions of law, the sources of law and the general structure of the US federal and state court systems;
2. The skill to research, analyze, and communicate findings of legal issues, analyze legal issues and ethical dilemmas by applying ethical and legal frameworks and reasoning;
3. The professional written and oral communication skills using legal terminology, persuasion and critical reasoning in a civil exchange;
4. Knowledge of key legal responsibilities and potential liabilities of stakeholders; and
5. The ability to evaluate legal cases to construct sound business recommendations considering the legal and ethical impacts.

The learning outcomes will be assessed during the culminating experience course in the last semester of the MSLS. The professional project will be a substantial piece of independent research or a significant professional project that is logically consistent with the content of the program. It will require students to utilize their content knowledge to identify a timely legal issue in their industry related to their concentration; research pertinent case law and other legal and business sources; prepare a memo, brief, or other written artifact; and engage in a professional presentation, oral argument, debate, conference or other activity to demonstrate their ability to evaluate, construct and persuasively communicate sound ethical business recommendations to plan for, mitigate, and/or resolve a pertinent legal issue.

Academic Program Requirements

Include the required number of semester credit hours (SCH), courses (course prefix and number, title, SCH), and any special requirements including thesis, internships, practicum, etc.

This is a 30-credit hour nonthesis program with a 12-credit hour core. Eight (8) hours of the core will be completed at Nashville School of Law (NSL) and transferred to Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). The remaining 22-credit hours of core and concentration hours will be provided by MTSU. Concentrations include (a) Compliance, Anti-Fraud, and Anti-Money Laundering; (b) Business Law; or (c) Entertainment.

Table 1. Required Core Courses

CORE (12 SCH)			
Prefix	Course Name	SCH	IHE
1054L	Contract Law	4	NSL
1064L	Legal Skills and Values I	4	NSL
BLAW 6xxx	Intro to Law & the U.S. Legal System (new)	1	MTSU

RIM 6xxx	Legal Ethics (new)	3	MTSU
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Table 2. Required Concentration Courses for Compliance, Anti-Fraud, and Anti-Money Laundering

CONCENTRATION IN COMPLIANCE, ANTI-FRAUD, AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING (18 SCH)			
Prefix	Course Name (12 SCH Required)	SCH	IHE
ACTG 6xxx	International Anti-Money Laundering: Regulation and Compliance (new)	3	MTSU
BLAW 6520	Current Legal Topics in Corporate Governance, Risk Management, and Fraud	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Professional Project (new)	3	MTSU
Choose one of the following (3 SCH Required) (May take the other as a Specialty Elective):			
INFS 6300	Management of Security Operations	3	MTSU
ACTG 5680	Forensic Accountancy and Fraud Auditing	3	MTSU
Prefix	Electives (6 SCH Required)	SCH	IHE
ACTG 6010	Foundations of Accounting I	3	MTSU
ACTG 6030	Foundations of Accounting III	3	MTSU
ACTG 6350	Accounting Analytics	3	MTSU
ACTG 6570	Management Control and Financial Reporting in the Global Corporation	3	MTSU
BIA 6905	Applied Business Analytics	3	MTSU
BIA 6910	Business Intelligence	3	MTSU
BLAW 6500	Legal Aspects of Healthcare	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Survey of Selected Business Law Topics (new)	3	MTSU
ECON/FIN 6730	Financial Institutions	3	MTSU
INFS 6200	Modeling for Problem-Solving	3	MTSU
MGMT 6670	Seminar in Negotiation	3	MTSU
MGMT 6750	Business Ethics	3	MTSU
PHIL 6xxx	Techniques in Reasoning and Argumentation		

Table 3. Required Concentration Courses for Business Law

CONCENTRATION IN BUSINESS LAW (18 SCH)			
Prefix	Course Name (12 SCH Required)	SCH	IHE

BLAW 6xxx	Survey of Selected Business Law Topics (new)	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Employment Law (new)	3	MTSU
MGMT 6670	Seminar in Negotiation	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxxx	Professional Project (new)	3	MTSU
Prefix			
Electives (6 SCH Required)		SCH	IHE
BCED 6820	Managerial Communication	3	MTSU
BLAW 6520	Current Legal Topics in Corporate Governance, Risk Management, and Fraud	3	MTSU
BLAW 6500	Legal Aspects of Healthcare	3	MTSU
ECON 5510	Unions and Collective Bargaining	3	MTSU
MGMT 6680	Seminar in Human Resources Management	3	MTSU
MGMT 6750	Business Ethics	3	MTSU
PHIL 6xxx	Techniques in Reasoning and Argumentation	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Drafting and Negotiating Entertainment Industry Contracts (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Copyright and Trademark Law (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	International Intellectual Property Law (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Social Media and the Law (new)	3	MTSU

Table 4. Required Concentration Courses for Entertainment.

CONCENTRATION IN ENTERTAINMENT (18 SCH)			
Prefix	Course Name (12 SCH Required)	SCH	IHE
RIM 6xxx	Drafting and Negotiating Entertainment Industry Contracts (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Copyright and Trademark Law (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Legal Issues in the Entertainment Industry (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Professional Project (new)	3	MTSU
Prefix			
Electives (6 SCH Required)		SCH	IHE
ACTG 6010	Foundations of Accounting I	3	MTSU
ACTG 6030	Foundations of Accounting III	3	MTSU
BCED 6820	Managerial Communication	3	MTSU

BIA 6905	Applied Business Analytics	3	MTSU
BLAW 6500	Legal Aspects of Healthcare	3	MTSU
MGMT 6670	Seminar in Negotiation	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Survey of Selected Business Law Topics (new)	3	MTSU
BLAW 6520	Current Legal Topics in Corporate Governance, Risk Management, and Fraud	3	MTSU
ECON 5510	Unions and Collective Bargaining	3	MTSU
MGMT 6750	Business Ethics	3	MTSU
PHIL 6xxx	Techniques in Reasoning and Argumentation	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	International Intellectual Property Law (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6020	The Music Industry: Revenues, Rights, and Professions	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Social Media and the Law (new)	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Rights Valuations and Acquisitions (new)	3	MTSU

Existing and New Courses

List existing and new courses for the proposed academic program including a catalog description and credit hours for each course. Include syllabi for all [existing] courses as an Appendix to the NAPP.

Table 5. Existing Courses

EXISTING COURSES				
Prefix	Course Name	Catalog Description	SCH	IHE
1064L	Legal Skills and Values I	This course starts the process of developing the legal research and writing skills necessary in the law profession. The course's approach to legal writing emphasizes clear writing and sound structure as assignments progress in complexity from professional correspondence to persuasive memos.	4	NSL
1054L	Contract Law	The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the principles and doctrines of contract law. By the end of the course, students will be expected to understand what a contract is, how a contract is formed, the defenses to contract formation, the concept of a contractual breach, common remedies for contractual breach, including damages,	4	NSL

		and additional related issues such as assignment of contract and third-party rights.		
ACTG 5680	Forensic Accountancy and Fraud Auditing	Prerequisite: ACTG 4510 or ACTG 5510 or ACTG 6030 or equivalent with minimum grade of C (2.0). Practice of forensic accounting, i.e., nontraditional investigative aspects of accountancy (e.g., litigation support, business interruptions, etc.); emphasis on fraud prevention and the detection of fraudulent intent to obtain improper individual or group gains.	3	MTSU
ACTG 6010	Foundations of Accounting I	Prerequisite: Graduate standing. Introduces corporate financial accounting reporting and how stakeholders use the information in decision-making. Topics include the accounting cycle, the creation of financial statements reported by the company, and the general ledger accounts used to prepare the statements.	3	MTSU
ACTG 6030	Foundations of Accounting III	Prerequisite: ACTG 6010 or equivalent with minimum grade of C (2.0). Introduces accounting information systems in a variety of technological environments. Topics include the collection, processing, reporting, and control of accounting information, with emphasis on the production cycle and decisions regarding planning and controlling in a business environment. Includes product cost and pricing decisions, analyzing cost behavior, and exploring factors that affect variances and profitability within an organization.	3	MTSU
ACTG 6350	Accounting Analytics	Prerequisite: ACTG 4510 or ACTG 5510 or ACTG 6030 or equivalent with a minimum grade of C (2.0). Study of the use of accounting analytics to identify, analyze, and solve accounting and business problems and communicate insights to stakeholders. Hands-on experience with analytics tools used by accounting professionals.	3	MTSU
ACTG 6570	Management Control and Financial Reporting in the Global Corporation	Prerequisite: ACTG 2120 or ACTG 2125 or ACTG 6010 or MBAA 6815 or equivalent with a minimum grade of C (2.0). Advanced study of the environment and realities of the global/multinational corporation. Details the differences between operating in one country (domestic operations) and many countries (multinational operations). Topics include a primer on foreign exchange and exchange	3	MTSU

		risk, objectives and design for a global control system, and legal issues such as corruption and taxation. Examines the challenges of a global audit and presents the global audit firm as a unique multinational business entity.		
BCED 6820	Managerial Communication	Analysis of communication theory and communication processes with emphasis on development of executive communication skills essential for understanding organizational processes from a holistic perspective. Covers organizational theory, behavior, and interpersonal communication from both a domestic and global perspective.	3	MTSU
BIA 6905	Applied Business Analytics	An applied approach to the understanding, development, and application of prescriptive and data analytic tools to model and analyze business data. A hands-on focus utilized with both commonly used spreadsheet software and specialized business intelligence software for the student to develop skills for self-service business analytics.	3	MTSU
BIA 6910	Business Intelligence	Prerequisite: BIA 6905 or QM 6770 or equivalent. A more advanced look at the application of business intelligence tools to solving business problems. Coverage will include the development and deployment of sophisticated reporting and dashboard systems to monitor and manage operations. Industry-standard business intelligence software utilized.	3	MTSU
BLAW 6500	Legal Aspects of Healthcare	The U.S. health care system; its major stakeholders; and the laws and regulations that apply to health care institutions, professionals, and suppliers including Medicare, electronic health records, health care fraud and abuse, compliance planning, certificates of need, health care business associations, federal tax exemption, liability and licensing issues, and ethics in decision making.	3	MTSU
BLAW 6520	Current Legal Topics in Corporate Governance, Risk Management, and Fraud	Prerequisite: Graduate standing. Delves into current legal, ethical and social responsibility issues in corporate governance and fraud. This course will explore fiduciary duties of corporate officers, directors; potential liability of auditors for failure to detect fraud and the need for professional skepticism; new business entity forms to promote social	3	MTSU

		responsibility; agency and worker classification; bankruptcy and fraud; and the future of corporate governance.		
ECON 5510	Unions and Collective Bargaining	Collective bargaining contract administration and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Information technology tools. Analytical focus on the impacts of total compensation agreements, strike strategies, and the interdependent influences of the union and non-union sectors of the economy. Practical cases emphasized. A brief international comparative survey of unions and other collective relationships included.	3	MTSU
ECON/ FIN 6730	Financial Institutions	Prerequisite: FIN 3010 with minimum grade of C. Focus on the common and distinctive aspects of the provision of financial services and the management of risk associated with those services. Roles, characteristics, and operation of financial institutions, constraints that these institutions face in meeting that objective, regulatory environment within which they operate, risks that they face and the management of those risks, evolution experienced during the 1980s and 1990s, and the probable course of change in the years ahead.	3	MTSU
INFS 6200	Modeling for Problem-Solving	Implements a hands-on approach to model development using electronic spreadsheets emphasizing problem solving in decision-making situations. Includes the development and application of extensive spreadsheet skills in modeling.	3	MTSU
INFS 6300	Management of Security Operations	Management of the information systems security function which includes understanding policy, governance, risk, and the application of appropriate solutions required to protect and enhance an organization's security posture. Topics include threats to security, risk assessment, application and data hardening, network security, fundamentals of encryption and authentication systems, and the application of appropriate response and recovery techniques necessary for business continuity.	3	MTSU
MGMT 6670	Seminar in Negotiation	A structured overview of the process of negotiation in organizations and manager development of improved negotiation skills. Topics include distributive negotiations, integrative negotiations, tactics, strategies, power dynamics, alternative dispute	3	MTSU

		resolution, and negotiation ethics in an organization environment.		
MGMT 6680	Seminar in Human Resources Management	Focuses on the responsibility all managers and leaders have with respect to an organization's greatest asset-its people. Explores the human resource management fundamentals such as compensation, employment law, human resource development, and talent management. Uses applied, high-impact assignments integrated with other relevant content, including current research, emerging trends, global issues, and technology.	3	MTSU
MGMT 6750	Business Ethics	Impact of individual values and ethics on the management of organizations. Topics include legal and ethical aspects of dealing with organization stakeholders: stockholders, consumers, employees, and the general community. Emphasis on using ethical theory to make good business decisions.	3	MTSU
RIM 6020	The Music Industry: Revenues, Rights, and Professions	Examines the dynamic environment called the music business. Utilizing evaluative elements of the industry (Billboard's MusicConnect, Pollstar, Performing Rights Organizations, etc.), students will review the publishing, recording, management, and touring history of an act and level of success based on current practices and genre/artist stature.	3	MTSU

Table 6. New Courses

NEW COURSES				
Prefix	Course Name	Catalog Description	SCH	IHE
ACTG 6xxx	International Anti-Money Laundering: Regulation and Compliance	In this course, students will learn about the techniques and typologies of money laundering and terrorist financing and the fundamental features of global and U.S. regulatory regimes governing anti-money laundering (AML) and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT), commonly referenced together as AML/CFT, and identifying risks and internal controls for AML/CFT.	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Survey of Selected Business Law Topics	This course surveys the legal rights and potential liabilities of business persons with an emphasis on identifying and communicating findings of legal issues in areas including, but not limited to torts, business and cyber-crimes, internet and	3	MTSU

		social media law, creditor-debtor relations and bankruptcy, immigration and labor law, consumer protection, environmental law, antitrust, securities regulation, intellectual property, and administrative law.		
BLAW 6xxx	Employment Law	A detailed examination of the legal rights and responsibilities of employers and employees with respect to fair employment practices; emphasis on significant statutes, administrative regulations, and judicial decisions forming the body of anti-discrimination law.	3	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Intro to Law & the US Legal System	The purpose of this course is to provide a general introduction to law, legal terminology, and the U.S. legal system, with an emphasis on the major legal principles and the functions of the federal and state court systems and the procedural steps involved in litigating a dispute.	1	MTSU
BLAW 6xxx	Professional Project	Culminating course for the business concentrations in the MS in Legal Studies degree, which students should take in their final semester. The professional project will be a substantial piece of independent research or a significant professional project requiring students to utilize their content knowledge to identify, research, prepare a written artifact, and engage in a professional presentation, oral argument, debate, conference or other activity on a timely legal issue in their industry related to their concentration.	3	MTSU
PHIL 6xxx	Techniques in Reasoning and Argumentation	Formal and informal techniques for the evaluation of deductive and probabilistic inference pertaining to legal reasoning, examination of common formal and informal fallacies, and analysis of arguments in ordinary language.	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Professional Project	Culminating course for Entertainment concentration in the MS of Legal Studies degree, which students should take in their final semester. The professional project will be a substantial piece of independent research or a significant professional project requiring students to utilize their content knowledge to identify, research, prepare a written artifact, and engage in a professional presentation, oral argument, debate,	3	MTSU

		conference or other activity on a timely legal issue in their industry related to their concentration.		
RIM 6xxx	Drafting and Negotiating Entertainment Industry Contracts	Drafting and Negotiating Entertainment Industry Contracts examines the key provisions in various entertainment industry contracts and the drafting and negotiation of these provisions from the perspective of the company (record label, music publisher, artist manager, etc.) and the talent (artist, producer, songwriter, etc.).	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Copyright and Trademark Law	Copyright and Trademark Law examines issues related to copyright and trademark law and practice. Through a review of key legal opinions and statutory law the course will cover the rights protected by copyright and trademark, copyright registration and recordation, trademark registration and maintenance, assignment of rights, infringement, defenses to infringement, and remedies for infringement.	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Legal Issues in the Entertainment Industry	Legal Issues in the Entertainment Industry reviews the plethora of legal issues that arise in the entertainment industry. Through a review of relevant case law, the course will examine legal issues faced by record labels, music publishers, film and television studios, recording artists, songwriters, actors, and more.	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	International Intellectual Property Law	International Intellectual Property Law examines copyright and trademark law and related issues in various jurisdictions outside the United States.	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Social Media and the Law	Social Media and the Law examines key issues related to social media including the First Amendment, defamation and privacy, and intellectual property.	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Legal Ethics	Legal Ethics reviews the Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct. Through a review of relevant case law the course will examine ethical issues faced by lawyers and law firms.	3	MTSU
RIM 6xxx	Rights Valuations and Acquisitions	Rights Valuations and Acquisitions examines transactions related to the valuation, sale and acquisition of copyright rights, trademark rights, and royalty rights from the perspective of the buyer and the seller.	3	MTSU

Program of Study

Provide a program of study for full-time students enrolled in the program. The program of study should include all courses listed by semester necessary for students to complete the proposed program.

The following program of study allows for a rotation that will allow students in all three concentrations to graduate within 2 years as a FT student.

Table 7. Two-Year Course Rotation for all MSLS concentrations

Term	Course	Location	Instructor
Y1 SU (4 SCH)	BLAW 6xxx Intro to Law & the U.S. System (1 hour)	ONLINE	Bradley
	RIM 6xxx Legal Ethics (3 hours)	F2F (NSL)	Ouellette
Y1 FA & SP (8 SCH)	1064L Legal Skills and Values (4 hours)*	F2F (NSL)	Funk (NSL)
	1054L Contract Law (4 hours)*	F2F (NSL)	Osborne (NSL)
Y2 SU (6-9 SCH)	BLAW 6520 Current Legal Topics in Corporate Governance, Risk Management, and Fraud (3 hours)	ONLINE	Benson
	BLAW 6xxx Survey of Selected Business Law Topics (3 hours)	F2F (NSL)	Johns
	RIM 6xxx Copyright and Trademark Law (3 hours)	ONLINE	Shackelford
	MGMT 6750 Business Ethics (3 hours)	ONLINE	ADJUNCT
Y2 FA (6 -9 SCH)	ACTG 6xxx International Anti-Money Laundering: Regulation and Compliance (3 hours)	ONLINE	Decker
	INFS 6300 Management of Security Operations (3 hours)	ONLINE	Greer
	BLAW 6xxx Employment Law (3 hours)	F2F (NSL)	ADJUNCT
	MGMT 6670 Seminar in Negotiation (3 hours)	ONLINE	ADJUNCT
	RIM 6xxx Legal Issues in the Entertainment Industry (3 hours)	ONLINE	Ouellette
			ONLINE

	RIM 6xxxx Drafting and Negotiating Entertainment Industry Contracts (3 hours)		
Y2	BLAW 6xxx Professional Project (3 hours)	ONLINE	Daniel
SP	BLAW 6xxx Professional Project (3 hours)	ONLINE	Daniel
(6-9 SCH)	RIM 6xxx Professional Project (3 hours)	ONLINE	Ouellette
	PHIL 6xxx Techniques in Reasoning (3 hours)	F2F (NSL)	Magada-Ward
	BLAW 6500 Legal Aspects Healthcare (3 hours)	F2F (NSL)	ADJUNCT

*NSL offers their courses in year-long formats.

Assessment and Evaluation

Identify who will be responsible for conducting program assessments and evaluations.

The program faculty will follow the University's established process for annual institutional effectiveness reporting and the requirements of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Student learning outcomes will be assessed annually. The program director, who is also the Compliance and Business Law concentration coordinator, will work with the Entertainment concentration coordinator and participating course instructors in the assessment process. Assessment results will be used to inform program improvement.

Articulation and Transfer

For proposed bachelor's programs, indicate all Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTP) that may be acceptable for entry into the proposed program and provide a sample degree plan for transfer students.

Not applicable, this is not a bachelor's degree program.

Section IX - Students

Academic Standards

Clearly state the admission, retention, and graduation standards, which should align with institutional or governing board policy.

To be admitted into the M.S. in Legal Studies, successful applicants must have:

1. A bachelor's degree earned from an accredited institution of higher education with GPA of 3.00 or higher.
2. A graduate or professional degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
3. An earned bachelor's degree with a GPA of 2.75 or higher and five (5) or more years of professional/managerial or military experience (resume and letter of intent required) or if the Applicant was enrolled in another graduate program but did not earn a degree from

that program, they must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 on all graduate work and a minimum of 2.75 on all undergraduate work.

To retain their status in the program, a student must:

1. Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 for all graduate work.
2. Have no more than six semester hours of C grade coursework applied toward the master's degree.
3. Have no grade below a C- applied toward a degree; however, all grades are included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA.

To graduate, an MSLS candidate must:

1. Complete a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate coursework, which includes the required courses, with a minimum GPA of 3.0.
2. All courses must be completed within 6 years from the time of admission.
3. Students will be required to reapply for admission if they miss one or more semesters, excluding summers, regardless of the reason. If admission requirements have changed since their initial admission, students applying for readmission will have to meet the new requirements.
4. No more than 30 percent of the total degree hours may be dually listed as undergraduate/graduate hours (5000-level courses).
5. No undergraduate courses may apply toward the graduate program requirements.

Marketing and Recruitment

Provide a plan that outlines how the proposed program will market and recruit a diverse population of students including underserved and historically underrepresented students and is aligned with the proposed implementation timeline.

Marketing will be conducted through social media and other web formats, print materials, and through contacts and promotion with area and regional legal training programs and professional organizations. MTSU also plans to collaborate with advising staff at other regional universities to encourage enrollment. There are several opportunities to market and recruit a diverse population of students, and MTSU is dedicated to the recruitment of students from all backgrounds.

Student Support Services

Provide an overview of student support services that will be available to all students in the proposed program (e.g., academic advising, tutoring, internship placement, career counseling, or others).

Students enrolled in the proposed MS in Legal Studies will have access to all support resources offered by MTSU, the Nashville School of Law, the MTSU College of Graduate Studies and the MTSU Jones College of Business. These services include academic advising, tutoring, and career counseling. In addition to these support options, the faculty work to connect students with campus resources such as the University Writing Center, Campus Tutoring, and the Career Development Center.

Section X – Instructional and Administrative Resources

Current and anticipated faculty resources should ensure a program of high quality. The number and qualification of faculty should meet existing institutional standards and should be consistent with external standards.

Current Faculty

Provide a list of current faculty, including primary department, highest degree earned, and describe how they will support the proposed program (time devoted to the program, administrative responsibilities, etc.).

Table 8. Current Faculty

Name	Highest Academic Degree	Rank	Department	% in Program [^]
Benson, Sandra S. [^]	JD, University of Georgia Law	Professor & Interim Dept Chair	Accounting	10%
Bradley, Susan K.	JD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville	FTT	Accounting	10%
Conceison, Michelle	MBA, Simmons University	Dept Chair	Recording Industry	10%
Daniel, Lara W.	JD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Professor	Accounting	10%
Decker, Jarett	JD, University of Michigan Law School	Jacobs Chair of Excellence	Accounting	10%
Funk, Glenn R.	JD, Wake Forest	Adjunct	Nashville School of Law	10%

Name	Highest Academic Degree	Rank	Department	% in Program[^]
Johns, Horace E.	PhD, Vanderbilt University	Professor	Accounting	10%
Macy, Amy	MBA, Belmont University	Professor	Recording Industry	10%
Osborne, Eric G.	JD, Stanford Law School	Adjunct	Nashville School of Law	10%
Ouellette, John R.*	JD, Nashville School of Law	Assistant Professor	Recording Industry	10%
Shackelford, Denise	JD, Nashville School of Law	Assistant Professor	Recording Industry	10%

[^] *10% represents 1 class per year; 20% represents 1 class per semester; 40% represents 2 classes per semester; 80% represents 4 classes per semester.

[^] Degree director and program coordinator for Compliance and Business Concentrations.

*Program coordinator for Entertainment Concentration.

Anticipated New Faculty

Describe the additional faculty needed during the next five years for the initiation of the program and list the anticipated schedule for addition of these faculty members.

Both the Department of Accounting and the Department of Recording Industry are experiencing enrollment growths and plan to highly prioritize requests for faculty lines for AY 2025-26 (Y2 of MSLS) to support their departments' needs. Both deans have expressed that additional hires are needed to support the departments beyond the proposed degree and that they plan to prioritize the hires in conversations with the Provost.

In Accounting, the expected annual salary cost of a new faculty line is \$179,400, which includes \$49,400 for benefits. In RIM, the expected annual salary cost of a new faculty line is \$82,800, which includes \$22,800 for benefits.

Table 9. Anticipated Faculty

Anticipated New Faculty				
Faculty Rank or Job Title	Full-time or Part-time	Anticipated Salary	Anticipated Start Date	Comments
Assistant Professor, Department of Accounting	FT	\$179,400	Year 2	The anticipated growth of graduate offerings in the department will require an additional fulltime tenure track faculty member.
Assistant Professor, Department of Recording Industry	FT	\$82,800	Year 2	This faculty member will bring industry experience and expertise to support the new program. They would be expected to teach any course in the MSLS – Entertainment Concentration.

Non-instructional Staff

Provide a list of anticipated non-instructional staff positions required along with a narrative of how these positions will support the new program.

An executive assistant, to be supervised by the MSLS coordinator, will need to be hired once enrollment reaches 25 students, which is expected in Year 3. The annual cost is \$75,900, which includes \$20,900 in benefits.

Table 10. Anticipated Non-Instructional Staff

Anticipated Non-Instructional Staff				
Job Title	Full-time or Part-time	Anticipated Salary	Anticipated Start Date	Comments
Executive Assistant	FT	\$75,900	Year 3	This staff member will provide administrative support for recruitment, collaborations with other institutions, alumni relations, internships, and career services.

Section XI - Resources

Equipment

Assess the adequacy of the existing equipment available for the proposed academic program. Include physical equipment, computer facilities, special classrooms, etc.

Nashville School of Law classrooms and courtrooms are equipped with current instructional technology, including computers, microphones, video projectors, and projector screens. Three

computer stations are available in the library computer lab, and faculty and students can access secure, password-protected wireless internet in all spaces.

Information Technology

Describe current information technology resources available to support the program.

All full-time faculty have up-to-date computing equipment; shared offices for adjunct faculty have the same computing equipment provided as full-time faculty. The Information Technology Division provides equipment upgrades for faculty computers on a three-year cycle. In Summer 2020, in response to COVID-19, utilizing federal funding awarded to MTSU via the CARES Act, all Jones College of Business and College of Media and Entertainment full-time faculty members received high-powered laptop computers. Faculty also have access to research software, such as SAS, SPSS, and Qualtrics.

Library Resources

Provide an overview of the current library resources available to support the proposed program. This might include a summary or listing of the appropriate monographs, serials, databases, and online resources held by the college libraries campus to support the proposed program.

MTSU's Walker Library maintains a subscription to Westlaw, a database heavily utilized by lawyers and other legal professionals. These resources complement the available resources, including Lexus Nexus, at the Nashville School of Law. The following are relevant discipline-specific library and learning resources held at MTSU.

Electronic Database	Subject
ABA Law Collection Periodicals	Law
ABI/Inform Collection	Business
Academic Search Ultimate	Business
ACM Digital Library	Security
American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries (Uniworld Online)	Business
AppliedScience & Technology Full Text	Security
Art Full Text	Entertainment
ArticleFirst	General
AtoZ World Business	Business
Best's Library Center (A.M. Best)	Risk Management
Business Abstracts with Full Text	Business
Business Insights: Essentials	Business
Business Source Complete	Business
CCH AnswerConnect	Business
Communication and Mass Media Complete	Entertainment
CQ Researcher	Law
Digital National Security Archives (Proquest)	Security
Direction of Trade Statistics	Business

Dissertations & Theses Global	General
EconLit with Full Text	Business
Emerald eJournals Premier	Business
Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive	Entertainment
Entrepreneurship: Gale Business	Business
Gale OneFile: Business	Business
HeinOnline Academic	Law
Hit Songs Deconstructed	Entertainment
IBIS World	Business
IEEE Xplore Digital Library	Security
Immigration Law & Policy in the U.S.	Law
Index to Legal Periodicals & Books Full Text	Law
International Monetary Fund eLibrary	Business
JSTOR	General
Music Index with Full Text	Entertainment
Music Industry Data	Entertainment
Music Online	Entertainment
Music Periodicals Database Full-text	Entertainment
NAACP Papers	Law
Naxos Music Library	Entertainment
Naxos Music Library Jazz	Entertainment
NBER Working Papers	Business
nkoda	Entertainment
OmniFile Full Text Mega Edition	General
Online Music Anthology (ARMA)	Entertainment
Oxford Art Online	Entertainment
Oxford Journals	Business
Oxford Music Online	Entertainment
PACER: Public Access to Court Electronic Records	Law
Preview of the United States Supreme Court Cases	Law
Project Muse	General
Proquest Art, Design, and Architecture Collection	Entertainment
Public Administration Abstracts	Law
Recent Researches in Music Online	Entertainment
Reference Solutions from Data Axle (formerly Reference USA)	Business
Regional Business News	Business
RILM Abstracts of Music Literature	Entertainment
S&P Capital IQ NetAdvantage	Business
Sage Journals Online	Business
Sage Research Methods	Business
Science Direct	General

Scopus	General
Simmons Insights	Entertainment
Social Explorer	Business
Statista	Business
Statistical Abstracts of the U.S.	Business
Statistical Abstracts of the World	Business
Taylor and Francis Online	General
Westlaw Campus Research	Law
Wiley Online Library	Law

Facilities

Describe facilities that will support the proposed program. For existing space and facilities, briefly describe the type(s) of space and facilities (e.g., a listing of the number and types of classrooms or labs, student offices or spaces, etc.).

The Nashville School of Law has adequate physical facilities to support the courses that will be taught face-to-face or in a blended format. The 33,000-square-foot building includes multiple instructional spaces, including five classrooms, two courtrooms, and one jury room. The NSL Law Library contains three study rooms, a computer lab, 30 study carrels, and four sets of tables and chairs. Students and faculty can also access the student commons with vending machines, a student break room, and an outdoor courtyard.

Other resources

Describe other support resources available to support the program.

None.



ALLIANCEBERNSTEIN®

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Chief Compliance Officer

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March 31, 2023

Dr. Robert Smith, Interim Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Dear Interim Director Smith,

We at AllianceBernstein L.P. are writing in support of the proposed M.S. in Legal Studies, a graduate program to be offered by Middle Tennessee State University in partnership with the Nashville School of Law. We are of the opinion that this is a great step in the efforts of the State in Work Force Development.

The M.S in Legal Studies as it is proposed will provide graduates of the program requisite legal knowledge that would be helpful across many industries, without necessarily becoming practicing attorneys. The regulatory environment in our industry and other industries requires skilled workers that can help small and large companies navigate that environment.

MTSU and NSL must be commended for pulling forces together to create a program that leverages the existing competencies of both institutions. The well-regarded faculty at MTSU will be joining forces with the faculty at NSL (who are respected practicing attorneys and judges) to bring a program that is very practical to the State. We also think the public and private nature of the partnership will make for a unique contribution in the education space.

For those of us in the Financial Services industry, we think that having a well-trained pool of employees especially in the area of Compliance (one of the Concentrations in the proposed degree program) will be a welcome addition to the talent pool in our geographic region. The BLS projection is that demand for employees in the field of compliance will continue to grow for the next decade. It should be noted that demand for skilled talent in Compliance is not limited to the financial services industry. Many of the industries represented in the Middle Tennessee area, such as Healthcare, Logistics, Manufacturing and Tourism and Hospitality have an increasing demand for Compliance professionals. According to a recent report by Robert Half (Global HR Consulting firm), the demand for compliance professionals will continue to increase as the regulatory environment gets more complicated.

We believe that the proposed M.S. in Legal Studies will be a great addition to the portfolio of degree programs available to Tennessee residents, and will create an additional pool of skilled talent, that many employers will find very attractive. We are excited at the prospects of having such a program in our growing and diverse business community.

Sincerely,



500 11th Avenue North, Suite 200
Nashville, TN 37203
615.743.3000

nashvillechamber.com

July 31, 2023

Dr. Robert Smith, Interim Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Dear Interim Director Smith,

We are writing to support the proposed M.S. in Legal Studies, offered as a graduate program by Middle Tennessee State University in partnership with the Nashville School of Law.

The Chamber is committed to supporting efforts that will strengthen the workforce in Tennessee. This program fills a critical vacuum of workforce needs. The value of legal education transcends the practice of law as it is a component of many occupations.

It is projected that the compliance field will continue to grow over the next decade, driving up the demand for employees in the field. The M.S. in legal studies will not only provide graduates with the legal knowledge required to succeed in many industries, but also the skills to help large and small companies navigate the various regulatory environments across the state.

The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce is the largest business federation in Middle Tennessee and has been continuously working on behalf of business since 1847. The Chamber is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating economic prosperity by facilitating community leadership. The Nashville Area Chamber represents more than 2,200 member businesses in 15 counties. Through a wide variety of programs and initiatives, the Chamber works to positively impact the economic vitality and enhance the quality of life in the region, while supporting the growth and prosperity of Chamber-member businesses and our partners.

The Chamber is supportive of this proposed program and believes it will be a strong addition to the courses offered to Tennessee residents. We are pleased to offer this letter of support and encourage the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to approve the proposal for the addition of this degree program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ralph Schulz'.

Ralph Schulz
President and CEO



NASHVILLE SCHOOL *of* LAW

From the office of the
PRESIDENT AND DEAN

July 31, 2023

Dr. Robert Smith
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., 9th Floor
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Dear Dr. Smith:

The Nashville School of Law is a nonprofit educational institution founded in 1911 to provide working men and women an opportunity to earn a law degree. Our founders believed that a legal education opened doors, not just to the practice of law but also to rewarding careers in business and public service. The intervening years have validated that belief. Many of our graduates have become leaders as lawyers and judges, business men and women, and national, state, and local public officials.

Today's businesses have increased their reliance on in-house lawyers and on non-lawyer employees who support their in-house legal staff as well as retained counsel. American law schools have responded by diversifying their programming to reach not only persons desiring to become attorneys but also those who are not interested in becoming attorneys but who are interested gaining a better understanding how the law impacts their particular professional interests. The American Bar Association now estimates that there are more than 125 non-J.D. Masters level programs currently being offered.

The leaders of both Middle Tennessee State University and the Nashville School of Law believe that collaborating to offer a non-J.D. Masters in Legal Studies degree will benefit Tennessee's businesses. The degree will also benefit persons whose career interests require an understanding of the law but not necessarily a J.D. degree. Our shared traditions of academic rigor will enable us to offer a high quality program that will train our graduates to help their employers respond effectively to the legal issues facing their businesses. In addition, the combination of our resources and the location of Nashville School of Law's campus will result in a program that is both convenient and affordable.

Very truly yours,

William C. Koch, Jr.



Financial Projections Form

Institution	Middle Tennessee State University
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Program Name	MS Legal Studies
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Projected One-Time Expenditures						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff						
Non-Instructional Staff						
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation	\$1,000					
Consultants	\$4,000					
Equipment						
Information Technology			\$5,000			\$5,000
Library resources						
Marketing	\$5,000					
Facilities						
Travel						
Other						
<i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i>	\$10,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000

Projected Recurring Expenditures						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$0	\$0	\$275,700	\$275,700	\$275,700	\$275,700
Non-Instructional Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$75,900	\$75,900	\$75,900
Graduate Assistants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Accreditation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Consultants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Information Technology	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Library	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marketing	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Facilities	\$0	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Travel	\$0	\$1,544	\$1,544	\$1,544	\$1,544	\$1,544
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i>	\$0	\$4,544	\$283,244	\$359,144	\$359,144	\$359,144
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$10,000	\$4,544	\$288,244	\$359,144	\$359,144	\$364,144

Projected Revenue						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition	\$0	\$26,040	\$136,710	\$153,636	\$158,844	\$164,052
Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenues	\$0	\$26,040	\$136,710	\$153,636	\$158,844	\$164,052



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **Approval of New Policy
51 Institutional Accreditation**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This policy identifies the institutional accrediting bodies recognized by the United States Department of Education that can serve as Middle Tennessee State University's accreditor and the process for the University to change its institutional accreditor.



51 Institutional Accreditation

Approved by Board of Trustees

Effective Date: _____, 2024

Responsible Division: Academic Affairs

Responsible Office: Provost

Responsible Officer: Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness

I. Purpose

This policy is established to ensure compliance with institutional accreditation policy requirements as specified in Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-185. It identifies the accreditation agencies or associations that may serve as an accreditor for Middle Tennessee State University.

II. Definitions

Institutional accrediting agencies or associations refer to the list of institutional accreditors recognized by the United States Department of Education (“USDOE”).

A. Available Accreditors

Middle Tennessee State University may choose an institutional accreditor from the following list of USDOE-recognized accrediting bodies.

1. Higher Learning Commission (HLC);
2. Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE);
3. New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE);
4. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU);
5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC); and
6. Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

III. Changing Institutional Accreditor

Middle Tennessee State University may choose to change its institutional accreditor. The proposed change will be initiated by a recommendation from the President of the University, with approval required by a majority vote of the full body of the Board of Trustees.

IV. Policy Review

The Board of Trustees shall review this policy once every three years to adapt to any changes made by the United States Department of Education or the United States Congress.

Forms: none

Revisions: N/A

Last Reviewed: N/A

References: T.C.A. §§ 49-8-203; 49-7-185.



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

SUBJECT: **Finance and Personnel Committee**

DATE: December 4, 2024

PRESENTER: Pete DeLay
Committee Chair

- Approval of Compensation
- Approval of 2024-25 October Revised Budget
- Approval of Sale of Property



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting
DATE: December 4, 2024
SUBJECT: **Compensation**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Policy 808 – Compensation Reporting and Approvals requires the Board of Trustees to approve salary increases of MTSU employees.

On June 11, 2024, the MTSU Board of Trustees approved the allocation of the state appropriation salary pool of \$3.7 million to employees. The approval involved the implementation of an across-the-board raise of 2.0% or \$750, whichever is greater, for employees on the payroll as of June 30, 2024. These increases were implemented on the July 31, 2024, payroll for classified and administrative staff and on August 31, 2024, for faculty.

Since the State only partially funds the salary pool, the University is committed to providing additional funding of \$1.5 million dollars and is recommending the implementation of market salary increases for faculty and staff. Of these funds, \$1.2 million dollars will be allocated to salary increases and the remaining to employee benefit costs associated with these increases.

The market adjustments will be based on 2020-21 CUPA data and will be effective January 1, 2025, for employees on the payroll as of December 31, 2024. With the allocated resources, employees whose current salary is below the market predicted salary will receive 65.0% of the recommended adjustment in accordance with the University's approved compensation plan.

Additional information has been included in your materials that show how these market salary adjustments affect the remaining gap between actual salaries and market salaries of the whole University.

Implementation of Market

	Full Market using 2020-21 CUPA Data	Market Increases January 1, 2025	Net Remaining Need for Market
Faculty	1,160,000	755,124	404,876
Administrative	547,921	356,670	191,241
Classified	170,804	111,188	59,616
Total Salary	1,878,725	1,222,992	655,732
Benefits at 22.5%	425,531	277,008	148,523
Total Including Benefits	2,304,256	1,500,000	804,256



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **2024-25 October Revised Budget**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Board of Trustees are charged with approving the operating budgets and setting the fiscal policies for Middle Tennessee State University. As required by THEC, one of the three budgets submitted by the University annually is an October (Revised) budget.

The attached budget submitted for your review and approval contains the following changes since the July (Original) Budget:

- Adjustments to Tuition and Fee Revenue to include the remaining tuition and enrollment increases.
- Increased state appropriations to reflect additional funding our Medical Education Program jointly administered by MTSU and Meharry Medical College.

- Adjustments to expenditure budgets for (1) re-budgeting of various student fee balances from the prior year, (2) personnel salary and benefit increases, (3) scholarship increases, and (4) purchases in process at year end but not be completed until the current fiscal year.
- Adjustments to auxiliary and restricted budgets, mainly related to adjusted funding for Federal Title IV and state financial aid programs.

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
ANALYSIS OF BUDGET CHANGES FOR REVENUE CATEGORIES
OCTOBER BUDGET 2024-25**

	2023-24	2024-25	2024-25	
	<u>Estimated Budget</u>	<u>July Budget</u>	<u>October Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Tuition and Fees	\$ 201,372,700	\$ 204,023,900	\$ 207,623,900	\$ 3,600,000
State Appropriations	140,511,400	145,584,200	146,853,600	1,269,400
Federal Grants and Contracts	1,150,000	1,150,000	1,150,000	-
Local Grants and Contracts	60,000	60,000	60,000	-
State Grants & Contracts	45,000	45,000	45,000	-
Private Grants & Contracts	282,500	282,500	282,500	-
Sales & Services of Educ Activities	680,600	646,700	646,700	-
Sales & Services of Other Activities	17,962,200	19,064,500	19,514,800	450,300
Other Sources	<u>2,967,900</u>	<u>2,967,900</u>	<u>2,967,900</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u><u>\$ 365,032,300</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 373,824,700</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 379,144,400</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 5,319,700</u></u>

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
UNRESTRICTED EDUCATION AND GENERAL EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY
OCTOBER BUDGET 2024-25**

	Estimated Budget 2023-24	July Budget 2024-25	October Budget 2024-25	Difference
Instruction	\$ 192,121,600	\$ 177,522,100	\$ 197,365,900	\$ 19,843,800
Research	12,112,900	6,865,400	13,198,700	6,333,300
Public Service	9,399,400	5,025,300	8,848,200	3,822,900
Academic Support	38,027,600	37,436,300	39,381,000	1,944,700
Student Services	43,872,700	43,328,300	46,093,300	2,765,000
Institutional Support	35,469,400	29,021,100	31,361,800	2,340,700
Operation and Maintenance	34,011,600	33,143,800	35,080,200	1,936,400
Scholarships and Fellowships	37,654,500	30,974,700	40,299,100	9,324,400
Transfers	6,672,000	10,507,700	10,957,600	449,900
Total	<u>\$ 409,341,700</u>	<u>\$ 373,824,700</u>	<u>\$ 422,585,800</u>	<u>\$ 48,761,100</u>

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
UNRESTRICTED EDUCATION AND GENERAL EXPENDITURES BY NATURAL CATEGORY
OCTOBER BUDGET 2024-25**

	Estimated Budget 2023-24	July Budget 2024-25	October Budget 2024-25	Difference
Professional Salaries	\$ 160,180,700	\$ 168,320,500	\$ 170,456,800	\$ 2,136,300
Other Salaries	25,808,300	26,020,800	28,380,800	2,360,000
Employee Benefits	70,499,100	71,707,600	71,541,600	(166,000)
Travel	5,020,500	4,913,700	5,612,400	698,700
Operating Expense	137,015,800	88,972,400	131,702,000	42,729,600
Capital Outlay	4,145,300	3,382,000	3,934,600	552,600
Transfers	6,672,000	10,507,700	10,957,600	449,900
Total	\$ 409,341,700	\$ 373,824,700	\$ 422,585,800	\$ 48,761,100

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
ANALYSIS OF BUDGET CHANGES FOR AUXILIARIES
OCTOBER BUDGET 2024-25**

<u>Auxiliary</u>	<u>2023-24 Estimated Budget</u>	<u>2024-25 July Budget</u>	<u>2024-25 October Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Bookstore	\$ 355,000	\$ 355,000	\$ 355,000	\$ -
Food Service	3,076,022	3,197,507	2,000,000	(1,197,507)
Housing	16,609,000	17,036,000	17,036,000	-
Vending	143,000	143,000	14,000	(129,000)
Recreational Center	2,894,730	3,105,730	3,037,230	(68,500)
Post Office	542,300	542,300	542,300	-
Parking Services	5,010,700	5,045,700	5,095,700	50,000
Residential & Commercial Rentals	200,000	200,000	200,000	-
Health Services	4,189,300	4,294,300	4,364,300	70,000
TN Miller Coliseum	633,700	633,700	633,700	-
Student LD Service	20	20	20	-
TOTAL	<u>\$ 33,653,772</u>	<u>\$ 34,553,257</u>	<u>\$ 33,278,250</u>	<u>\$ (1,275,007)</u>

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
SUMMARY OF RESTRICTED CURRENT FUNDS AVAILABLE AND APPLIED
OCTOBER BUDGET 2024-25**

Revenues	2023-24 Estimated Budget	2024-25 July Budget	2024-25 October Budget	Difference
Tuition and Fees	\$ 1,400,000	\$ 1,400,000	\$ 1,400,000	\$ -
Federal Grants and Contracts	39,500,000	40,500,000	42,500,000	2,000,000
State Appropriations: Centers of Excellence	439,400	451,800	452,000	200
State Appropriations: Special Allocations	489,500	489,500	489,500	-
State Grants & Contracts	47,750,000	47,500,000	50,500,000	3,000,000
Local Grants & Contracts	75,000	50,000	50,000	-
Private Grants & Contracts	500,000	500,000	500,000	-
Private Gifts	2,800,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	-
Endowment Income	750,000	750,000	750,000	-
Other Income	1,550,000	1,550,000	1,550,000	-
Total Revenues	<u>\$ 95,253,900</u>	<u>\$ 96,191,300</u>	<u>\$ 101,191,500</u>	<u>\$ 5,000,200</u>
Expenses				
Instruction	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 3,200,000	\$ 700,000
Research	5,550,000	6,285,000	6,285,000	-
Public Service	6,550,000	6,275,000	7,200,000	925,000
Academic Support	420,000	400,000	400,000	-
Student Services	3,750,000	3,375,000	3,500,000	125,000
Institutional Support	100,000	100,000	100,000	-
Operation and Maintenance	75,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	-
Scholarships and Fellowships	76,250,000	76,250,000	79,000,000	2,750,000
Auxiliary Enterprises	47,500	-	-	-
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 95,242,500</u>	<u>\$ 96,185,000</u>	<u>\$ 100,685,000</u>	<u>\$ 4,500,000</u>

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BUDGET SUMMARY
OCTOBER BUDGET 2024-25**

	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2024-25</u>
	<u>Estimated Budget</u>	<u>July Budget</u>	<u>October Budget</u>
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 64,057,900	\$ 19,759,900	\$ 60,232,300
Revenue	493,940,000	504,569,300	513,614,200
Expenses	<u>538,238,000</u>	<u>504,563,000</u>	<u>556,549,100</u>
Ending Fund Balance	<u>\$ 19,759,900</u>	<u>\$ 19,766,200</u>	<u>\$ 17,297,400</u>

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
TSSBA DEBT SERVICE COVERAGE - DISCLOSED PROJECTS ADJUSTMENT
October Budget 2024-25**

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Total Project Budget</u>	<u>Amt. Financed by TSSBA</u>	<u>Est. Annual Debt Service</u>	<u>Est. Annual Related Fee Rev</u>
Estimated Budget:				
Addition & Renovations to Murphy Center	66,000,000	66,000,000		
Multi-sport Indoor Practice Facility	28,400,000	28,400,000		
Athletic Video Board Upgrades	3,900,000	3,900,000		
July Budget:				
Addition & Renovations to Murphy Center	66,000,000	66,000,000		
Multi-sport Indoor Practice Facility	28,400,000	28,400,000		
Athletic Video Board Upgrades	3,900,000	3,900,000		
New Parking Structure	30,700,000	30,700,000		
Floyd Stadium Turf Replacement	1,300,000	1,300,000		
Reese Smith Jr Field Turf Installation	1,500,000	1,500,000		
October Budget:				
Addition & Renovations to Murphy Center	66,000,000	66,000,000		
Multi-sport Indoor Practice Facility	28,400,000	28,400,000		
Athletic Video Board Upgrades	3,900,000	3,900,000		
New Parking Structure	30,700,000	30,700,000		
Floyd Stadium Turf Replacement	1,300,000	1,300,000		
Reese Smith Jr. Field Turf Installation	1,500,000	1,500,000		



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Action Item

MEETING: Winter Quarterly Board Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

SUBJECT: **Land Disposal – 915 E. Bell Street**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In accordance with MTSU Policy 622 requiring MTSU Board of Trustees approval for land disposals that are outside of the Campus Master Plan acquisition area, approval is requested to dispose of 915 E. Bell Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130.

Built in 1954, 915 East Bell Street is a 1,258 square foot single family residence (3 BR / 1 Bath) on .27 acres of land west of MTSU's campus.

Given that this property is outside of the current MTSU acquisition zone, noncontiguous with other MTSU owned properties, and requires extensive renovations, MTSU seeks MTSU Board of Trustees approval for land disposal.

If land disposal is approved, MTSU will seek State Building Commission approval to dispose of this property in accordance with State Building Commission Policy (Item 8). Disposal process includes a public notice of sale and award of sale by a sealed bid process.

Enclosed are site plans showing location of 915 E. Bell Street.



Site Vicinity Map
915 E. Bell Street