Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON)

Policy A1.6 Expedited Academic Programs: Approval Process

Institution:	Tennessee State University
Proposed Academic Program:	Agricultural Business and Leadership, MS
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2023
Proposed CIP Code:	01.0101 (Agricultural Business and Leadership)
ELON Submission Date:	01/24/2023
Posted on the THEC Website:	01/24/2023
Public Comment Period:	January 25 – February 3, 2023

Expedited Letter of Notification Checklist

THEC Academic Policy A1.6 (Section 1.6.4A) Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON) Requirements:

- ✓ Letter of Support from the President/Chancellor signifying institutional governing board or system office support for development;
- ✓ Institution name, proposed academic program, degree designation, proposed CIP code, and CIP code title;
- ✓ Academic Program Liaison (APL) name and contact information;
- ✓ Implementation timeline;
- ✓ Background narrative;
- ✓ Justification for consideration of expedited policy;
- ✓ Existing programs of study at the institution;
- ✓ Community and industry partnerships;
- ✓ Accreditation;
- ✓ Administrative structure;
- ✓ Enrollment and graduate projections;
- ✓ Alignment with State Master Plan and institutional mission profile;
- ✓ Student interest;
- ✓ Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee universities; and
- ✓ Articulation and transfer.

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
3500 JOHN A. MERRITT BOULEVARD
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37209-1561

OFFICE OF
THE PRESIDENT

January 23, 2023

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

Dear Dr. Smith,

On behalf of Tennessee State University (TSU), I respectfully submit the Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON) for the Master of Science degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership (ABL), for your review. The Board of Trustees for Tennessee State University approved the proposed program and the submission to THEC at its November 17, 2022, board meeting.

This proposed program is in agreement with TSU's strategic plan to support the needs of the community and provide support for workforce development in Tennessee. The request to establish this new M.S. degree program in ABL in the College of Agriculture is timely and based on solid evidence that the program will serve the market demand and substantial student interest. Research has shown there is a lack of adequate offerings in this field by the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) institutions.

My administration is committed to supporting the MS degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership. Please contact me if you require additional information. We appreciate your support of TSU's plans to include the program in the scope of academic programming.

Sincerely,

Glenda Glover

Glenda Glover
President

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON)

To

Establish a Master of Science (M.S.) Degree Program in Agricultural Business and Leadership

Submitted
To

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission

January 23, 2022

Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON)
Policy A1.6 - Expedited Academic Programs: Approval Process

Institution Name:	Tennessee State University
Proposed Academic Program:	Master of Science in Agricultural Business and Leadership with Concentrations in 1) Agribusiness Management and 2) Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication
Proposed Degree	Master of Science
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2023
Proposed CIP code and title:	01.0101, Agricultural Business and Leadership

The Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (DAES) in the College of Agriculture, Tennessee State University (TSU), is proposing to establish a new M.S. degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership. The proposed program will train students in Agribusiness and Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, combining theory and methods in management, leadership, entrepreneurship, communication, human resources, education, and sustainability to address local/Tennessee and global agricultural problems/issues. It will further strengthen the existing curriculum and realign it to market needs by providing additional employability skills to graduates. The new degree will provide synergy to adequately prepare the future agricultural workforce for Tennessee and the nation. The program is expected to attract students from related disciplines such as business, economics, education, and other social sciences. Overall, the proposed M.S. program in Agricultural Business and Leadership will increase enrollment and the number of Tennesseans with an advanced college degree in a growing demand area in the context of projected labor market conditions. Research and teaching in Agribusiness and Agricultural Education in the DAES at TSU has served as a model for many small to medium size colleges and universities. This new M.S. degree program will enhance DAES' role as a leader in these areas by expanding program offerings to the M.S. degree level and maintaining the relevance of the programs. TSU is known to produce the largest number of African American graduates in the state, and this degree program allows African American students to pursue an M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership at an institution of their choice.

Expedited Letter of Notification Checklist

THEC Academic Policy 1.0 (Section 1.0.6A) Letter of Notification Requirements

- ✓ Letter of Support from the President/Chancellor signifying institutional governing Board or system office support for development;
- ✓ Program name, degree designation and CIP code;
- ✓ Proposed implementation date;
- ✓ Academic Program Liaison (APL) name and contact information;
- ✓ Overview; Background and Overview;
- ✓ Accreditation;
- ✓ Administrative structure;
- ✓ Enrollment and Graduation Projections;
- ✓ Institutional Alignment and Demand.

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Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON) Proposal for a Master of Science (M.S.) Degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership

1 Overview

Institutional Name: Tennessee State University

Proposed Academic Program: Master of Science in Agricultural Business and Leadership with Concentrations in 1) Agribusiness Management and 2) Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication

Degree designation: Master of Science

Proposed CIP code and CIP Code title: 01.0101, Agricultural Business and Leadership

Academic Program Liaison (APL) name and contact information

Charlise Anderson, Ed.D.

Managing Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness

Tennessee State University

3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.

Nashville, TN 37209-1561

(615) 963-6471

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Implementation Timeline – Provide a timeline that includes the following items:

- Proposed dates for the external judgment site visit Tentative, February 20-24, 2023
- Estimated date of submission of the external review report to THEC and the institution (within 30 days following the site visit) March 20, 2023
- Estimated date of institution's response to external review (within 30 days of receiving the external reviewer's report) April 28, 2023
- Estimated timeline for proposed programs that will seek programmatic accreditation NA
- Proposed date (month and year) of the institutional governing board's meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval November 17, 2022 (Approved)
- Proposed date (month and year) of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission meeting to consider the proposed academic program for approval May 11, 2023

Proposed implementation date (semester and year) when students will enroll in the proposed academic program Fall 2023

2 Background and Overview

2.1 Background narrative

The Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (DAES), College of Agriculture, at Tennessee State University (TSU) herewith submits to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) an Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON) to modify the existing concentrations in Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education within the M.S. in Agricultural Sciences degree program, into a Master of Science (M.S.) degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership (ABL).The request to establish this new M.S. degree program in ABL in the DAES is timely and based on solid evidence that the program will serve the market demand and substantial student interest. Research has shown there is a lack of adequate offerings in this field by the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) institutions. The circumstances that initiated the need and development of the proposed academic program are described below:

- Within the M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences, more than half of students are enrolled in the Agribusiness Management and Agricultural Education program areas (Table 1a). Considering the two-degree programs, the proposed new M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership, and the existing M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences, each degree program is producing ample graduates meeting the minimum threshold of 24 semester credit hours per *THEC Policy A1.6 Expedited Academic Programs: Approval Process* of developing a new high demand academic program with a minimum of 24 semester credit hours for a standalone M.S. degree program (Table 1b). The three concentrations in the M.S. in Agricultural Sciences degree program will be consolidated into the proposed new M.S. degree program in ABL with two concentrations, Agribusiness

Management (ABM) and Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (ALEC), meeting the minimum threshold of 24 semester credit hours per *THEC Policy A1.6 Expedited Academic Programs: Approval Process* of developing a new high demand academic program with a minimum of 24 semester credit hours for a standalone M.S. degree program (Table 1b).

- Separation of the current M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences and the proposed M.S. degree in ABL into distinct and individual master's degree programs will align graduates with their career choices and expand their employment opportunities. The department's survey via Qualtrics demonstrated the need for degrees that align with the career aspirations of students, graduates, and those in the field already (Table 2).

Table 1a. Students enrolled and graduated with M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences including Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education at Tennessee State University in the past five years

Academic Year	Students Enrolled for a M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences		Students Graduated with a M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences	
	Total	Three Concentrations*	Total	Three Concentrations*
2017 - 2018	*37*	*23*	*18*	*8*
2018 - 2019	*45*	*22*	*13*	*3*
2019 - 2020	*27*	*19*	*15*	*4*
2020 - 2021	*26*	*16*	*13*	*4*
2021 - 2022	*28*	*18*	*17*	*10*
Total			**76**	**29**

** Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education*
Note: 1) All enrollment data presented here at the beginning of spring semester of that academic year
2) M.S. in Food and Animal Sciences was initiated starting of spring 2019 (those students were not included as a total number of M.S. students)
3) M.S. in Environmental Science degree was initiated starting of Fall 2020 (those students were not included as a total number of M.S. students)

Table 1b. Students graduated with M.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences including Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education at Tennessee State University in the past five years.

Concentration/ Academic Year	**Number of Students**
Agribusiness Management and Analysis	
2017 - 2018	*6*
2018 - 2019	*3*
2019 - 2020	*2*
2020 - 2021	*2*
2021 - 2022	*7*
Sub-total	**20**
Agricultural Education	
2017 - 2018	*2*
2018 - 2019	-
2019 - 2020	*2*
2020 - 2021	*2*
2021 - 2022	*3*
Sub-total	***9***
Total	**29**

- The proposed M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership will focus on food marketing, specialized food supply chains, trading, communications, and leadership. This program offering will equip students with more business and social science analytical, pedagogy, and leadership methods and concepts, whereas the Agricultural Science Master's degree focuses more on biological science-based analytical methods and concepts.
- The proposed academic program will provide communication and leadership skills to students concentrating in Agribusiness, and Agricultural Education. As the demand expands for a skilled workforce with higher educational levels and specialized training, this proposed degree program is designed to meet such a demand in the food and agricultural sector at the local, state, and federal levels of the economy, as well as in the private sector.

Table 2. A survey conducted via Qualtrics among career aspirant students, graduates, and professionals working in the field already (n=87). Survey was conducted during fall semester of 2022.

			Q6: What is/was your highest academic degree? -			
	N = 87	**Total**	Some college courses	BS	MS	Other
Q1: If a MS program in Agribusiness and Leadership becomes available at TSU, in your view, what are the possibilities? Please mark all that apply.	I will be interested to enroll in the program in the next three years	18.4%	50.0%	29.6%	2.6%	18.2%
	I will be interested to enroll in the program in the next 3-6 years	10.3%	30.0%	14.8%	2.6%	9.1%
	Colleagues in Agricultural Sciences and/or Natural Resources from other colleges and universities will be interested in the program	26.4%	30.0%	14.8%	33.3%	27.3%
	Colleagues from other disciplines will be interested in the program	19.5%	20.0%	11.1%	28.2%	9.1%
Q2: Completion of MS program will provide opportunities to the graduates in the following areas. Please mark all that apply.	It will open more doors for my career	67.8%	100.0%	70.4%	56.4%	72.7%
	It will increase my salary	65.5%	80.0%	74.1%	56.4%	63.6%
	It will enhance sense of accomplishment	48.3%	4.0	11.0	18.0	9.0
	It will give me a competitive advantage over others in my field	49.4%	70.0%	40.7%	56.4%	27.3%
	It will increase networking opportunities	50.6%	50.0%	55.6%	43.6%	63.6%
	It will prepare me for further education (i.e. PhD)	41.4%	50.0%	25.9%	51.3%	36.4%
	It will improve my personal development	50.6%	60.0%	59.3%	41.0%	54.5%
Q4: What would be your preference of delivery format?	Full-time - This means you probably couldn't keep your current position. It also means you could finish sooner and probably get your degree paid for by conducting research with a faculty member.	26.4%	90.0%	18.5%	10.3%	45.5%
	Part-time - You may be able to keep your current position. However the degree would take longer to complete, and you wouldn't receive financial assistance from TSU.	64.4%	10.0%	70.4%	79.5%	45.5%
Q5: If you are answering this question, you selected part-time. Please select the program modifications that would be important to you.	Online learning that allows me to complete as much of my degree as possible remotely	60.9%	10.0%	74.1%	69.2%	45.5%
	Face-to-face learning that allows me to be in the same time and place as my instructors	2.3%	10.0%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	Evening courses when everyone meets at the same time, whether its online or face-to-face	19.5%	10.0%	18.5%	25.6%	9.1%
	Daytime courses when everyone meets at the same time, whether its online or face-to-face	2.3%	10.0%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%
Q9: Where did you receive your highest degree or where did you take your last college courses? - Selected Choice	Tennessee State University, College of Agriculture	25.3%	90.0%	11.1%	20.5%	18.2%
	Tennessee State University, other college	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%	0.0%
	Other college or university (Please write it in here)	72.4%	10.0%	88.9%	74.4%	81.8%
Q7: Please select the Concentration you are interested in for the program in Agribusiness and Leadership.	Ag Business	24.1%	30.0%	29.6%	15.4%	36.4%
	Ag Leadership, Education, and Communication	66.7%	70.0%	63.0%	74.4%	45.5%

- This program will offer students an in-person thesis-based option and an online non-thesis-based option. This flexible programming will enhance our ability to recruit students across the state and beyond. This program will help improve TSU's Land-grant Programmatic cornerstones of teaching, research, and extension. TSU, being the 1890 Land Grant institution, has a history of producing many minorities Agribusiness and Agricultural Education undergraduate majors. Thus, this M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership would also increase the number of minority M.S. graduates in this field.
- TSU, an 1890 Land-grant institution, has a very robust agricultural research program supported by more than 25 million dollars in annual research funding. Research is primarily from the United States Department of Agriculture/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), the State of Tennessee, and other funding agencies. This increase in funding has enabled hiring of additional faculty, and increased research capacity and graduate student support for the proposed M.S. degree program.
- The DAES has a strong cadre of faculty who earned their Ph.D. degrees from prestigious universities nationwide. The DAES has more than twelve faculty members with specialized credentials, training, and experience in Agricultural Business and Leadership areas and they will support the M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership; they are already pursuing ground-breaking research and teaching in these fields.
- Increase in research funding has necessitated hiring of research staff and faculty, creating opportunity for hiring graduate research assistants and establishing new in demand degree programs. USDA funds will be applied to the proposed program to fund ten students annually through Graduate Research Assistantships. An additional ten students will be

funded through faculty research grants. These funded students will pursue the thesis option, whereas students pursuing the non-thesis option will be self-supported.

Overall, the M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership will consist of two concentrations, Agribusiness Management (ABM) and Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (ALEC). Students will have the option to enroll for a thesis option or a non-thesis option. The thesis and non-thesis options of each concentration in the M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership degree program will require 33 and 35 credit hours, respectively (Table 3a, 3b). The two concentrations curriculum, thesis and non-thesis will comprise a common core of classes (12 and 11 credit hours, respectively), concentration classes (12 and 15 credit hours, respectively), and nine credit hours of guided elective classes for the thesis and non-thesis options. The students pursuing the non-thesis option will complete and present before a graduate committee a research project through the Independent Study of Contemporary Issues and Problems class (AGSC 5350). All the required and elective courses for this new degree program are already offered within the three-concentrations (Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education) and other degree programs offered within TSU. Since the degree program will be offered both on-ground and online for students pursuing the thesis and non-thesis options, respectively, the courses will be delivered on-ground and online to accommodate all students enrolled in the degree program. All the elective courses listed in Table 3b are offered both online and on-ground.

Table 3a. Credit hour requirement for the M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership

Requirements	Credit Hours	Description
Group I: M.S. Common Core	(12)[1] (11)[2]	5 common courses for all students pursuing the thesis option 5 common courses for all students pursuing the non-thesis option
Group II: Concentration Courses	(12)[1] (15)[2]	4 courses for the thesis option 5 courses for the non-thesis option
Group III: Guided Elective Courses	(9)[1] (9)[2]	3 courses for the thesis option 3 courses for the non-thesis option
Total Credit hours required	(33)[1] (35)[2]	

[1]Thesis option

[2]Non-thesis option

Additional academic requirements are as follows:

- Students must maintain a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0.
- Students pursuing the thesis option must pass a research proposal defense.
- Students pursuing the thesis option must complete and defend a thesis, for which prior committee approval of the topic is necessary.
- Students pursuing the non-thesis option must pass a written and oral comprehensive exam for which prior committee approval of the topic is necessary.

Table 3b. The M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership Degree Curriculum

Name of course	Course number	Credit hours
Core Courses (12 credit hours minimum)[1] or (11 credit hours minimum)[2]		
Statistics for Research[1,2] or Statistical Research Methods in Agricultural Education (online)	AGSC 5060 or 5150	3
Research Methods[1,2] or Qualitative Research Methods in ABL (Online)	AGSC 5110 or 5065	3
Thesis Writing[1†]	AGSC 5120	4
Graduate Seminar in Agricultural Sciences[1,2,†]	AGSC 5610, 5620	2
Independent Study of Contemporary Issues & Problems[2, †]	AGSC 5350	3

Concentration I: Agribusiness Management [(12 credits hours)[1] and (15 Credits)[2]]		
Food Marketing & Retail Management*	AGSC 5014	3
Agribusiness Management & Market analysis*	AGSC 5080	3
Food and Fiber Industry Economics & Policy*	AGSC 5090	3
Environmental Resource Econ. & Management*	AGSC 5100	3
Applied Microeconomics in Agribusiness*	AGSC 5300	3
International Agriculture Trade and Marketing*	AGSC 5310	3
Agribusiness Strategy*	AGSC 5330	3
Guided Electives I: Agribusiness Management (9 credits maximum) [1,2]		
Foundations in Accounting[#]	ACCT 5000	3
Program Planning and Evaluation*	AGSC 5040	3
Independent Study of Contemporary Issues & Problems[1]*	AGSC 5350	3
Behavior in Organizations[#]	MGMT 6020	3
Management and Evaluation of Information Systems[#]	BISI 6130	3
Managerial Economics[#]	ECON 6110	3
Concentration II: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication [(12 credits hours)[1] and (15 Credits hours)[2]]		
Foundations of Agricultural Education*	AGSC 5010	3
Teaching & Learning Methods in Ag & Extension**	AGSC 5020	3
Curriculum Development & Program Leadership in Ag & Extension**	AGSC 5030	3
Program Planning/Development & Evaluation in Ag & Extension**	AGSC 5040	3
Methods of Teaching Ag & Env STEM***	AGSC 5050	3
Guided Electives II: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (9 credits maximum)[12]		
Agribusiness Management & Market analysis*	AGSC 5080	3
Food and Fiber Industry*	AGSC 5090	3
Environmental, Resource Economics & Management*	AGSC 5100	3
Contemporary Issues in Animal Science*	AGSC 5140	3
Livestock Production and Management*	AGSC 5150	3
Independent Study of Contemporary Issues & Problems (For thesis option)	AGSC 5350	3
Adolescent Development*[#]	TELC 5001	3
Survey of Exceptional Children*[#]	TELC 5004	3
Teaching and Learning with Technology*[#]	TELC 5005	3
Teachers as Agents of Change[#]	TELC 5006	3

(Continue next page)

[1]Thesis option

[2]Non-thesis option

[†] Denotes courses already offered by other degree programs and concentrations in the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. These include courses offered in the Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and the Agricultural Education concentrations.

[#]Denotes courses offered by other degree programs at TSU.

*Denotes courses offered in the Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education Concentrations; these concentration was modified into the new M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership. These concentrations will be discontinued.

**Courses required for those seeking Teaching License.

***Course required for endorsement to teach Agriscience.

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) of the proposed program include the following:

- Students will analyze essential Agricultural Business, leadership, education, and communication competencies in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.
- Students will acquire working knowledge and be able to apply management and leadership theories and principles to the development of agricultural business and education issues that will translate directly into vital competencies for careers in agribusiness and agricultural education.
- Students will develop and apply skills in entrepreneurial and managerial thought processes and decision making.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze data and draw appropriate statistical conclusions.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in critical thinking by analyzing situations and constructing and selecting viable solutions to solve problems.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

2.2 Justification for consideration of expedited policy

The proposed M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership is among THEC's high-demand academic programs eligible for Expedited Academic Approval. Within THEC classification, these high-demand programs include the *Agricultural/Animal/Plant/Veterinary Science and Related Fields (*THEC Academic Policy A 1.6: Expedited Academic Programs Approval Process *of* High demand programs). Per page 18 of the THEC Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report, "In 2020, farming operations occupied around 40 percent of the state's nearly 27.0 million acres of land area according to the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research. Farming generated $3.6 billion in cash receipts during 2020, "with about 65.5 percent of this value coming from crops and 34.5 percent from animals and animal products."

The proposed graduate degree program includes the academic disciplines of agribusiness and agriculture education, which combines theory and methods to address global food, agricultural business, and agricultural development issues. Within Tennessee and the nation, there is a growing and urgent demand for a well-trained, skilled labor force to meet the current need for professionals with critical and analytical business, leadership, and communication skills to fulfill the unique demands of the food and agribusiness industry (Wilson, Niewoehner-Green, Rodriguez, M. T., 2019). According to the USDA over half (56%) of agriculture job opportunities from 2020-2025 are in management and business (42%) and education, communication, and government (14%).

The long-term occupational projections (2020-2030) shows growing demand in management related occupations (https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm). Appendix B shows the percentage change and average annual growth of management related employment in neighboring Southern states.

Even with the high unemployment in several sectors of the U.S. economy, specialized fields such as food and agribusiness marketing, agricultural communication and education,

finance, supply chains, management, and leadership continue to experience demand for a skilled workforce. As a social science degree, this program will not only fill workforce needs by graduates accepting a job but by graduates preparing and developing others for the workforce demands.

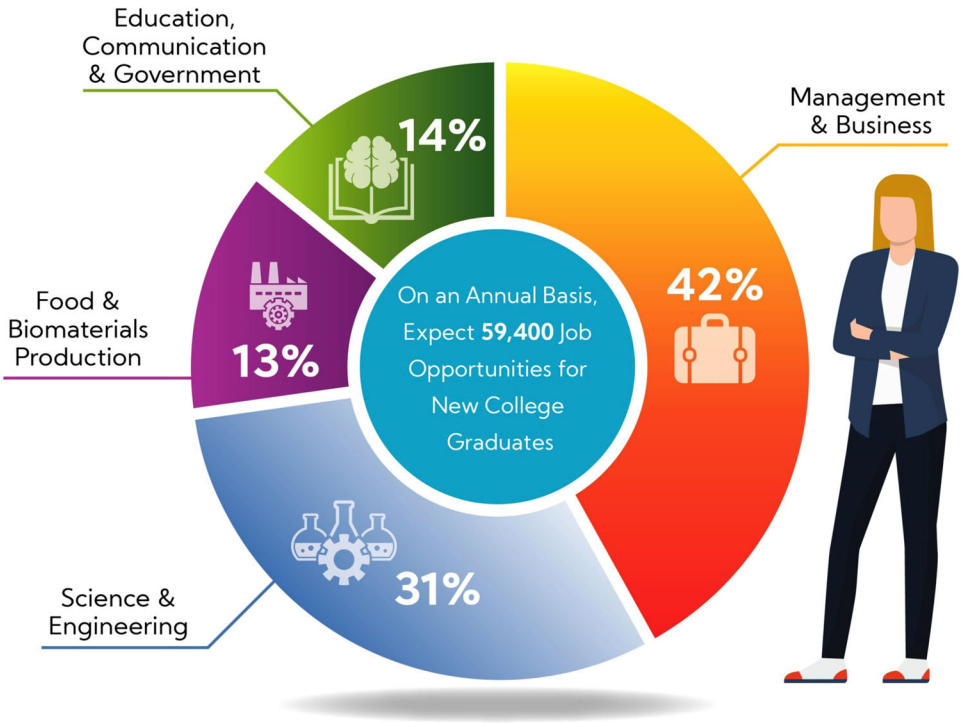


Figure 1. Employment opportunities for college graduates in food, agriculture, Renewable Natural Resources, and the environment; 2020-2025

Furthermore, the current economic difficulties in the U.S. and abroad have resulted in a significant increase in the demand for professionals trained in value chain management, not only in the food and agribusiness sector but also in other related sectors. Developments in the use of information technology, the application of Ag technology, and science in food processing, manufacturing, and distribution have outpaced many other areas in speed and magnitude. The growing use of these technologies by private industry is increasing the number of opportunities for

graduates and making it necessary to retrain the existing workers. According to a National Association of Colleges and Employers (2022) survey, 85% of employers are seeking problem-solving skills, 79% are seeking quantitative/analytical skills, 75% are looking for graduates who can work as a team, and 73% are looking for communication skills. These skills are precisely what the proposed ABL program will provide for students.

Lastly, the need for qualified educators of formal and non-formal education remains dire, and this new program will help address this shortage. For instance, in fall 2022, the department conducted survey described and reported on above, agriculture educators indicated their level of interest in the proposed degree program (Tables 2). In a state where students generally seek opportunities in their region, 80% of the agriculture teachers in Tennessee who responded that they only had a B.S. degree said they would be interested in completing the proposed M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership. 90% of respondents have completed their B.S. degree from colleges besides TSU, so the need is statewide. Teachers believed the proposed program would open more doors for their careers, increase their salary, give them a competitive advantage, increase networking, and improve their personal development. 93% surveyed were most interested in the part-time, online, non-thesis option, indicating a real need for the content and format of our proposed program.

2.3 Existing programs of study at the institution

The existing concentrations in Agribusiness Management and Analysis, Food Supply Chain Management and Agricultural Education within the M.S. in Agricultural Sciences degree program will be modified into a Masters' of Science (M.S.) degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership (ABL) with the following two concentrations: (1) Agribusiness

Management (ABM), and (2) Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (ALEC) (Tables 1a, 1b).

Tennessee State University has become a leader in agribusiness management and education. Our teaching/research program has served as a model for many small to medium size colleges and universities. To maintain and enhance our role as a leader, not only do we need to expand our program offerings to the master's degree level, but we also need to keep it relevant to meet changing requirements of employers and other stakeholders. This will allow us to continue to meet the needs of our clients – the students. Tennessee State University is, therefore, presented with an opportunity to offer a curriculum to prepare the next generation of business professionals and leaders in agribusiness, education, and related areas. By doing so, TSU will be recognized as a leading institution offering training in agricultural business and leadership and blending agricultural sciences disciplines with management and leadership to provide unique training opportunities to its graduates.

From 2017-2022, the Agribusiness Management, Food Supply Chain Management, and Agricultural Education concentrations of the M.S. in Agricultural Sciences degree program have graduated over five students/year (Tables 1a, 1b above). The existing M.S. degree program, however, tends to expose its Agribusiness Management and Agricultural Education concentrations among agricultural science majors without taking full advantage of the appeal of Agricultural Business and Leadership to the broader social, economic, and applied sciences disciplines. The existing M.S. program, though, has served us well in the past and has also highlighted areas that require further attention. There is room to take more advantage of the benefits of the program offering and the growing market demand and trends. Therefore, the proposed change is driven by the need to restructure and expand the existing program to benefit students and society.

2.4 Community and industry partnerships

The need to establish the M.S. degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership was discussed among stakeholders such as the College of Agriculture Advisory Board (CAAB). The CAAB comprises the biggest agricultural input companies such as Syngenta, Nutrien, Bayer, Corteva; other Agricultural sector related companies such as IBM, Farm Credit America, Kroeger; Governmental agencies such as Tennessee Department of Agriculture and United States Department of Agriculture, besides business community partners and Tennessee Farm Bureau. These Advisory Board members and local universities have expressed interest in this new degree program, and they will serve as feeder organizations/institutions to this new degree program. The proposed degree program was developed over time due to our systematic and continuous consultative efforts with stakeholders and community partners to improve our academic programs. This development was guided by the College and TSU's strategic plan and is inspired by and in alignment with demands of the market, economy, and the needs of students.

The short-term benefits will be to provide well-educated, highly skilled, and marketable graduates. The long-term benefit will be that TSU's stature as a food and animal science education leader will be enhanced, thereby indirectly assisting in the recruitment and retention of top-quality faculties and students at TSU. In addition, TSU will contribute towards meeting workforce diversity goals of public and private sector organizations in the business, leadership, and education side of the agricultural subsector of our economy.

Letters of support from the following business and community partners are included in the Appendix A:

- **Charlie Hatcher,** Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture
- **Eric Mayberry,** President Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation

- **Pete Nelson**, President, and Executive Director at AgLaunch, a non-profit organization utilizing a farm-centric innovation platform to efficiently bring new ideas into agriculture.
- **Christopher Stripling**, Chair and Professor, Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, University of Tennessee
- **Andrew Muhammad**, Professor and Blasingame Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Policy, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture
- **Donald L. Sudbrink Jr**., Professor and Chair - Agriculture, Austin Peay State University
- **Phil Warfield**, President, Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators, an association of members involved in school-based agricultural education middle school, high school, post-secondary, and state agricultural education leaders
- **Julie Poquette,** Global Talent Acquisition Lead, Syngenta

3 Accreditation

Tennessee State University's Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research Planning and Assessment and Accreditation has completed the internal SACSCOC vetting process and pre-determined that the proposed degree program will not require a SACSCOC substantive change. The new degree program is developed by combining three currently existing concentrations into a new degree program with two concentrations, thus requiring no new course offerings.

The proposed program does not have a programmatic accrediting agency.

4 Administrative Structure

Following is an organizational chart depicting the role of the College, Department, and Director of Graduate Programs roles for the proposed academic program. The administrative structure for the proposed M.S. degree program is presented in Figure 2.

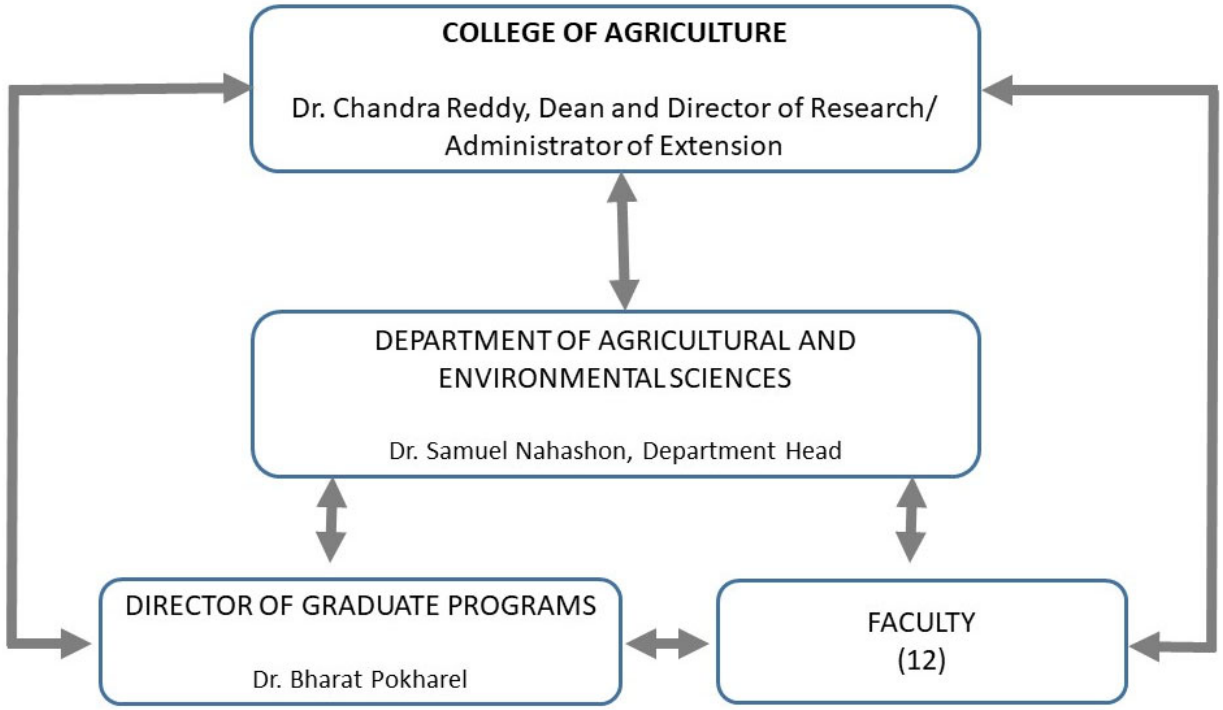


Figure 2. College academic structure

5 Enrolment and Graduation Projections

The projected student enrollment and graduation of the proposed M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership for the first five years are presented in Table 3. These projections are based on several factors:

1. Current enrollment and graduation trends in the Department of Agricultural Sciences and the three concentrations elevated into this M.S. degree program.
2. Feasibility survey of the currently enrolled student (graduate and undergraduates) within the College of Agriculture.
3. Feasibility surveys of schoolteachers.
4. Informal contacts with/online research information gathered from the potential employers of program graduates.
5. Enrollment and retention trends in agricultural sciences.

Based on these surveys and information gathered, we estimate that the program would attract ten students during the first year, and 6, 6, 8, and 9 additional students for a total of 15, 15, 18, and 18 students during the years 2-5, respectively. The above expectations of student interest are also based on public awareness of the employment opportunities in the agricultural business, leadership, education, and communication fields globally and in the following United States government and other public and private agency documents: CDC, DOE, EPA, USDA, and the Department of the Interior.

Table 3. Projected Enrollments and Graduates

Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1	2023-24	10		0
2	2024-25	15	-1	5
3	2025-26	15	-1	6
4	2026-27	18	-1	8
5	2027-28	18	-1	8

6 Institutional Alignment and Demand

6.1 Alignment with State Master Plan and institutional mission profile

The proposed program supports the State's future development efforts as stipulated in the Complete College Tennessee Act and the State's Master Plan for Higher Education (https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thec/bureau/ research/other-research/master-plan/MasterPlan 2025_0418.pdf). The proposed program will make major contributions to the following functions of Tennessee's Master Plan (2015 – 2025):

1. Direct higher education to be accountable for increasing the educational attainment levels of Tennesseans.

   The Agricultural Business and Leadership degree program will enhance and expand graduate opportunities equipping students with more business and social science analytical, pedagogy, and leadership skills, especially undergraduate students majoring in Agribusiness, Business Management and Administration, and Agricultural Education, Leadership, and Communication at TSU and other universities in Nashville and the region. From the perspective of TSU, the proposed degree program will complement and strengthen the existing B.S. degrees in Agribusiness, and Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication in the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Graduates in these B.S. degree programs will have a seamless transition into the M.S. degree program. As TSU represents the only agricultural public institution in Nashville with **a "high research"** classification by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, this degree program will provide a more convenient and local opportunity for citizens who want to obtain a M.S. degree in specialized areas of the Agricultural Sciences. As public universities tend to be more affordable than private

universities, access to an Agricultural Business and Leadership M.S. degree program within the Nashville area will be more attractive to students who want to remain local, including employees that work for the corporate, state and federal agricultural agencies based in Nashville. If approved, this degree program will represent the only Agricultural Business and Leadership M.S. degree program in Middle and West Tennessee. One of the current focal areas of the College of Agriculture at TSU is to improve the quality of academic programs through review, modification, and update of curricular offerings to meet the needs of Tennessee and society at-large. This request for this new M. S. degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership is therefore commensurate with the mission of the College, University, and State Master Plans.

2. Address the state's economic development, workforce development, and research needs.

With additional degree programs such as this M.S. degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership, TSU can also significantly increase the number of minority M.S. graduates, especially those with needed skills such as agricultural business management, agricultural education and leadership skills. The State Master Plan and TSU Institutional Mission suggest that academic program growth should consider future job markets in Tennessee; priority will be placed on the development or the expansion of academic programs that have a direct relationship with career opportunities. Therefore, the new program will contribute to the University's mission by realigning curricula to meet market needs and improve job prospects of graduates (please see job market demand in *Feasibility Study 2)*. The proposed M.S. degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership is also consistent with the University's mission to foster scholarly inquiry and research, lifelong learning, and a commitment to service. The proposed degree program will further

this mission by providing a new academic area for student development that involves applied research, practical coursework, and both thesis- and non-thesis-based inquiry focused on agricultural issues that impact the everyday lives of Tennesseans.

The THEC State Master Plan also touts the importance of Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy (Figure 3). The master plan even cites the following figure, depicting these critical skills students and citizens should possess. Each of these human skills (i.e. communication, critical thinking, analysis), business enablers (i.e. digital design, project management, business process), and digital building blocks (i.e. data analysis, data management) in this model are foundational to the learning outcomes students will achieve in the new Masters of Agricultural Business and Leaders (SLOs listed on page 10, section #2, Background Narrative). These skills will help students secure stackable/credentials/higher education, higher pay, and increased opportunities in high-demand jobs with established and new businesses/industries in the state. Equipping students with these skills also helps the state of Tennessee accomplish its goals of improving Tennessee's economy and the financial

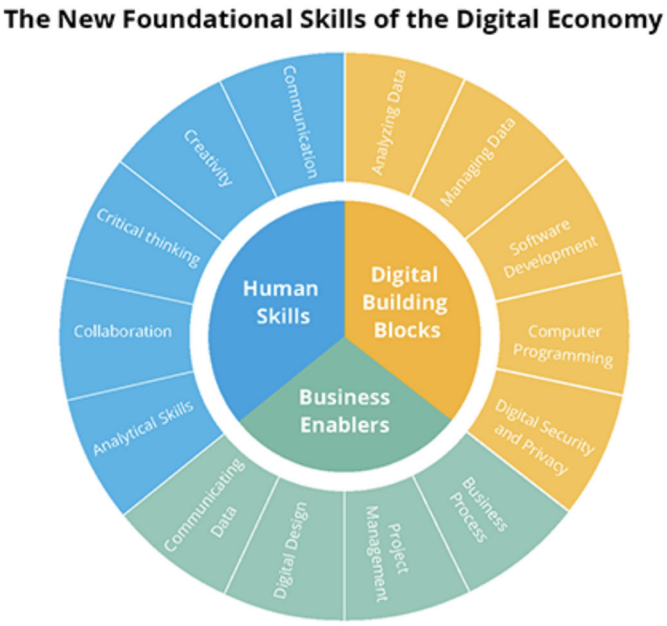


Figure 3. Skills that are in wide demand by employers, command salary premiums and are crucial for workers who want to keep pace with a changing job market (Source: Burning Glass Technologies)

security of Tennesseans. Specifically, it will help the THEC Master Plan achieve its goal of increasing enrollment in majors leading to high-demand jobs.

This program has the potential to provide students with important knowledge of real world, agricultural-based issues, and the opportunity to work collaboratively with TSU faculty to develop applied solutions. The program will most notably benefit the state and beyond by increasing the number and quality of graduate students interested in professions that will tackle emerging issues in agricultural business management, food supply chain, agricultural education, and leadership. There is great need for such graduates to support the state's future development efforts.

3. Ensure increased degree production within Tennessee's capacity to support higher education.

This proposed program will further TSU's long-term goal of becoming a premier public research land-grant university and a destination campus in the region. The proposed program will benefit TSU via increased graduate student enrollment, high research productivity, and community and statewide engagement. Our proposed curriculum map will provide students with important interdisciplinary training to understand emerging and complex national and global issues in agriculture, with a specific focus on agricultural business management, education, and leadership. Such training will provide prospective students with the skill sets necessary for employment in state and federal agencies, consulting firms, industry settings, and academia. To ensure program success, the College of Agriculture has committed USDA funds to support 10 students annually via graduate research assistantships. An additional 10 students will be supported by faculty research grants. This support will ensure program success via consistent production of trained

graduates. Faculty will work collaboratively to recruit students, not only locally, but also from other regions of the United States and the world, to maintain an ethnically and socially diverse group of graduate students. Collectively, our focus on strong academic program that will provide students with applicable skills that will make them strong candidates in a competitive job market.

4. Align with institutional mission.

Tennessee State University (TSU) is a classified under the historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). Through its mission, TSU pledges to establish academic program priorities and to maximize resources committed to its strengths and to new programs that respond to a demonstrated need. As a minority land-grant institution, TSU has a legacy of recruiting, retaining, and graduating a disproportionate number of minorities, especially at the undergraduate and master's degree levels. It is part of the mission of TSU to transform lives, prepare a diverse population of leaders, and contribute to economic and community development of Tennesseans by providing affordable and accessible educational programs at various degree levels, promoting academic excellence through scholarly inquiry, teaching, research, lifelong learning, and public service. This proposed degree program is aligned with TSU's mission as it seeks to diversify and provide leaders for the monoethnic fields of agricultural business and leadership. It also aligns with TSU's mission because it will make education in this area more accessible through the online offerings. It aligns with TSU's mission of promoting academic excellence because the team of professors delivering the program are highly qualified and extremely motivated to share their knowledge with students of the proposed program. THEC shares the TSU mission, as mentioned above. As noted in the THEC Master Plan, "the state must continue

to prioritize and make strides toward access, inclusion, and equity for all student subgroups" (p. 6) as it propels student success, family prosperity, and the future workforce.

5. Use institutional mission differentiation to realize statewide efficiencies through institutional collaboration and minimized redundancy in degree offerings, instructional locations, and competitive research.

One of the overarching goals of our degree program proposal is to provide a unique degree program. We have evaluated thoroughly all M.S. degree granting institutions in Tennessee and have made it a priority to reduce programmatic redundancy in our M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership degree program. If approved, TSU will provide the only M.S. degree program equipping students with agricultural business and social science analytical, pedagogy, and leadership skills in Tennessee. Our programmatic reviews found that no other public or private university in Tennessee offers a similar program to that which we are proposing.

We have taken seriously the goal of differentiating our program from those offered by other institutions in Tennessee and this program's curriculum is unique both in the region and in the state. Tennessee State University is known to produce the largest number of minority graduates in the state and this degree program provides minority students an option to pursue this M.S. degree in agricultural business and leadership at an institution of their choice.

6.2 Student interest

In fall 2022, the faculty/department-conducted a needs assessment introduced above helped determine interest in the program. The sample included Extension Agents (20%), Teachers (46%), Current Students (27%), and Current Government/Business Workers (7%). Among current

students, 50% of respondents indicated they would be interested in starting the program in the next three years, and 30% indicated they would be interested in starting the program in 6-10 years. Among respondents already possessing of a B.S. degree, 30% indicated they would be interested in starting in the next three years and 15% demonstrated interest in beginning the program in the next 6-10 years. Overwhelmingly, current undergrads and respondents already in possession of a BS degree reported that their new master's degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership would open more career opportunities (100%/70%) and increase earning potential (80%/74%). The needs assessment also determined that 74% of students preferred online learning, a finding uniquely appropriate to the structure of this program that provides an online, non-degree option.

This survey data provides compelling evidence of student interest in the proposed program. Types of evidence vary, including enrollment in related concentrations or minors; representative student and alumni surveys; and national, statewide, and professional employment forecasts and surveys.

6.3 Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee universities

There are two programs in Tennessee with the CIP code (01.0101) of the proposed M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership (Table 4). These include an M.S. degree programs in Food and Agricultural Business which is offered by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and an M.S. degree program in Agricultural and Natural Resources which is offered by the University of Tennessee, Martin. These two M.S degree programs graduate on average 8-9 students per year.

Table 4. Degree Programs in Tennessee with CIP Code Category (01.01- Agricultural Business and Management) that is most closely related to the Proposed M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership degree program.

IPEDS Data Center: Completions Data CIP Category: 01.01-Agricultural Business and Management Award Level: Master Degrees				
Institution Name	**# of Graduates 1st Major 2020**	**# of Graduates 2nd Major 2020**	**# of Graduates 1st Major 2021**	**# of Graduates 2nd Major 2021**
The University of Tennessee-Knoxville	8	-	9	-
The University of Tennessee-Martin	11	-	7	-

Even though these two (2) public institutions of higher education in Tennessee offer M.S. degree in agricultural business and related areas, none have concentrations in agribusiness management (ABM) and agricultural leadership, education and communication (ALEC) which are provided for by the proposed M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership. This distinguishes TSU's proposed program from those of the other institutions and therefore the proposed M.S. degree program is not in competition with these other M.S. programs within the state.

A) **The University of Tennessee – Knoxville** offers five-year B.S. /M.S. degree in Food and Agricultural Business with four concentrations – a) Agricultural Production and Technology Management, b) Law and Policy, c) Finance and Risk Management, and d) Food Industry Management. After receiving their BS degree (120 credit hours, including 9 hours of graduate courses), student may take additional three semester and one summer to get thesis-based MS degree by completing an additional 22 credit hours of graduate work. A total of 31 credit hours of graduate coursework is required.

B) **University of Tennessee – Martin** offers M.S. degree in Agricultural and Natural Resources with three concentrations – a) Systems Science in Agriculture, b) Natural Resource Systems

Management, and c) Agribusiness & Risk Management. The degree curriculum comprises of 36 hours of graduate coursework including 18 hours of concentration required courses. The M.S. degree is offered primarily online. The Agribusiness and Risk Management (ARM) concentration provides a range of agricultural economics course work developed specifically to address risk management issues associated with agribusiness enterprises. Students selecting the Natural Resources Systems Management (NRSM) concentration can choose courses related to natural resources management including the areas of wildlife biology, park administration, geosciences, and agricultural engineering technology. The Systems Science in Agriculture (SSA) concentration features course work in agricultural engineering technology, management science, and agricultural economics providing a well-rounded graduate education for professionals seeking careers in agricultural industries and government agencies.

The proposed MS degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership is however unique and different from these programs. The proposed graduate degree program includes the academic disciplines of agribusiness and agriculture communication and leadership, which combines theory and methods to address global food, agricultural business, and agricultural development issues. This new degree program addresses a key need area of Tennessee and the nation, the growing demand for professionals with critical and analytical business, leadership, and communication skills to fulfill the unique demands of the food and agribusiness industry. The proposed M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership will focus on food marketing, specialized food supply chains, trading, communications, and leadership. Unlike other existing programs, this program will equip students with more business and social science analytical, pedagogy, and

leadership methods and concepts. Also, the proposed academic program will provide communication and leadership skills to students concentrating in Agribusiness, and Agricultural Education and increase the number of graduates in this discipline, especially minority students.

6.4 Articulation and transfer

- This is a two-year M.S. degree program; therefore, articulation for transfers from a college or technical college program is not applicable.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Support Letters

Appendix B: Employment Projections

Appendix A: Support Letters

Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Ellington Agricultural Center | P.O. Box 40627 | Nashville, TN 37204
615-837-5100

Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M.
Commissioner

Bill Lee
Governor

Dec. 16, 2022

Dr. Chandra Reddy, Dean
Director of Research and Administrator of Extension
College of Agriculture
Tennessee State University
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37209-1561

Dear Dr. Reddy,

As an advisory board member for the Tennessee State University's (TSU) College of Agriculture and on behalf of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA), I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the proposed degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership in TSU's Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

This new degree program has the potential to create a pipeline of qualified employees for the agricultural and forestry sectors of the economy, strengthening supply chains and international trade. A skilled workforce with training in communication, leadership, and agribusiness is essential for agriculture to flourish.

TDA is committed to working with higher education institutions to equip students for employment in Tennessee's top industry—agriculture.

Please reach out to our office if you have any questions or need any further information.

Sincerely,

Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M.
Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture

TENNESSEE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

December 13, 2022

Dr. Chandra Reddy, Dean
Director of Research and Administrator of Extension
College of Agriculture
Tennessee State University
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd., Nashville TN 37209-1561

Re: Development of Graduate Program in Agricultural Business and Leadership

Dear Dr. Reddy,

Please accept this letter of support from the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation (TFBF) for the proposed degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership within the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (DAES), College of Agriculture, Tennessee State University (TSU).

Working with Tennessee farmers, I regularly see and clearly understand the need within the food and agricultural sector for a skilled workforce trained in communication, leadership and agribusiness. This proposed program is unique in preparing graduates for this sector of agriculture.

The TFBF represents a diverse array of farmers and commodity producers and is the largest general farm organization in the state. TFBF farmer members are concerned with the economic impact of the shortage of skilled labor. Farm Bureau members annually participate in an extensive process to develop policy positions to guide the organization. Our members have a vested interest and personal stake in a strong well trained labor force in agricultural markets, supply chains, international trade, communications, and leadership. Lack of trained labor in the agriculture arena is a significant problem and has been a recurring topic in our agricultural policy discussions.

We are excited about the opportunities a TSU degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership could provide and applaud TSU for pursuit of this program. We support the program concept and look forward to seeing this proposal become a reality.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our support. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or a member of my staff.

Sincerely,

Eric Mayberry

Eric Mayberry
President

cc: Melissa Bryant, TFBF Regional Field Director

147 Bear Creek Pike, Columbia, TN 38401 • P.O. Box 313, Columbia, TN 38402-0313 • Phone 931-388-7872 • Fax 931-381-3540

AGLAUNCH

BRINGING STARTUP CULTURE TO AGRICULTURE

November 22, 2023

Dr. Sam Nahashon
Chair
Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Sciences
Tennessee State University, Nashville
TN 37209

Re: Letter of Support

Dear Dr. Nahashon,

I am writing on behalf of AgLaunch Initiative in support of the proposed MS degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership at the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at Tennessee State University.

AgLaunch Initiative is a farmer-centric innovation engine focused on Climate Smart startup technology. To date, portfolio startups have raised over $100million in investments, created more than 300 jobs, and supported farmer profitability. The farmers all provide support to startups with data, field trials, and funding. The proposed MS degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership is much needed. Our farms and startups are in desperate need of digital ag and related expertise.

Highly trained graduates in Agribusiness Management are in great demand by the public and private sector enterprises in the State of Tennessee and in the United States. This is in line with the U.S. Department of Labor projections that: on average about 141,800 new openings for agricultural workers will open over the decade. The significant portion of these job opportunities annually will be in management, business, and related areas. Increasing globalization and market competition have also forced businesses to undertake a restructuring program to adjust as quickly as possible to the effects of three forces: consumers, competition, and change. The effects of these forces have changed the business environment, defined the types of jobs available, and skills required to operate in the food and agribusiness sectors hence the need for trained and customized managers/administrators in the agribusiness sector is increasing at a rapid pace. This requirement can best be met by offering MS degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership.

1319 Heistan Pl.
Memphis, TN 38104

pnelson@aglaunch.com
www.aglaunch.com

We believe there is a compelling need for this program and are willing to assist the university in developing the program for its initial launch. The proposed program seeks to benefit Agribusiness sector, which would really serve to move Tennessee's economy forward for the benefit of citizens and, communities.

Thank you for your attention to this letter of support and please contact me if you need further detail.

Sincerely,

Pete Nelson
President
AgLaunch Initiative

1319 Heistan Pl.
Memphis, TN 38104

pnelson@aglaunch.com
www.aglaunch.com

UTIA INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
320 Morgan Hall
2621 Morgan Circle
Knoxville, TN 37996
office: 865-974-7371
fax: 865-974-7383
alec.tennessee.edu

November 7, 2022

John C. Ricketts, PhD
Professor
College of Agriculture
Tennessee State University
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37209

Dear Dr. Ricketts,

I am happy to submit this letter of support for the Master of Agricultural Business and Leadership degree at Tennessee State University. In fact, we are in the process of seeking THEC approval for a PhD in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC), and your proposed program will be a perfect complement and serve as a pipeline for us to recruit high-quality diverse ALEC PhD students. Furthermore, the need for your proposed program in Tennessee and across the Southern Region is great. According to a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) report, approximately 39% of agricultural management and business and 53% of agricultural education, communications, and government service annual openings are filled by individuals from allied fields of study who do not receive training specific to agriculture. Additionally, the Management and Business employment cluster is the largest identified cluster in the USDA report with projected annual openings expected to average 24,700. Your proposed degree should have broad appeal and benefit agribusiness, agriscience teachers, and extension educators.

I strongly recommend this program be approved in Tennessee. In addition, my ALEC faculty at the University of Tennessee offer our assistance in program development and look forward to continued partnerships in all areas of our land-grant mission with Tennessee State University.

Sincerely,

Christopher Stripling
Professor and Department Head

UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU
Real. Life. Solutions.

INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
302 Morgan Hall
2621 Morgan Circle
Knoxville,TN 37996
main: 865-974-7231
fax: 865-974-7484
economics.ag.utk.edu

December 2, 2022

Dr. Sam Nahashon, Chair
Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Sciences
Tennessee State University
Nashville, TN 37209

Dear Dr. Nahashon,

I am writing this letter to strongly support your proposal for an M.S. degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership (ABL) in the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at Tennessee State University (TSU). The importance of this proposed program to students majoring in Agribusiness Management cannot be overstated.

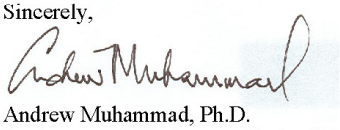
As Professor and Blasingame Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Policy, I engage representatives from the food and agribusiness sector as well as USDA official and agricultural leadership at the state level. In both the public and private sector, there is keen interest for increased agribusiness management training at the graduate level. The last two decades have brought significant changes to the U.S. food marketing system. Food and fiber businesses face unique challenges because of agriculture's relative uniqueness (greater risk and uncertainty, price volatility, rapidly changing food/nutrition demand globally). Thus, it is necessary that graduates have a better understanding of food value chains and business innovations including new products, markets, and technologies; this understanding and training can be provided by the proposed graduate degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership.

TSU plays an important role in the education of populations that have traditionally been underrepresented in science and technology fields, and the proposed M.S. degree offering will further the three-pronged mission of Education, Extension, and Research at TSU. Furthermore, this degree program will provide TSU with the capacity to educate and train the next generation of Agribusiness Management professionals, benefiting industry organizations and federal agencies seeking to hire from underrepresented groups.

I commend you and your colleagues for this endeavor, which will advance education and training in Agricultural Business Management and provide critical learning opportunities to enhance the agribusiness workforce.

Feel free to contact me with any further questions.

Sincerely,



Andrew Muhammad, Ph.D.
Professor and Blasingame Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Policy
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture
amuhammad@utk.edu

Austin Peay State University

Department of Agriculture

November 18, 2022

Dr. Samuel Nahashon.
Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Tennessee State University 3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37110

Dear Dr. Nahashon:

I write this letter in strong support of Tennessee State University's Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences' (DAES) initiative to establish an MS degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership. I am familiar with the programs in the DAES and the College of Agriculture at TSU; the Department has rigorous and innovative training of graduate students in agriculture. Their programs attract students from within the state of Tennessee, the nation and from around the world. The proposed MS degree program will therefore benefit the state of Tennessee significantly by training its future agricultural workforce, especially minorities who are under-represented in the agricultural fields.. These graduates will also contribute to the state and global demand for doctoral graduates in agricultural business and leadership.

At Austin Peay State University's Department of Agriculture, we regularly graduate students with interest in pursuing an MS in Agricultural Business and Leadership and the one proposed by Tennessee State University's DAES provides such an opportunity for them. APSU's Department of Agriculture and Tennessee State University's DAES have had good working relationship and this new MS degree will be yet another area that would continue to strengthen these partnerships.

Again, I strongly support the initiative by the DAES at Tennessee State University to establish this MS degree in Agricultural Business and Leadership. If you have any questions regarding our support to the DAES at Tennessee State University please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Donald L. Sudbrink, Jr., Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Austin Peay State University
Department of Agriculture
P.O. 4607
Clarksville, TN 37044
931-221-7266
sudbrinkd@apsu.edu

Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators

Phil Warfield,
TAAE President,
Agriculture Educator & FFA Advisor,
Anderson County High School
140 Maverick Circle, Clinton, TN 37716

November 6, 2022

Dr. John C. Ricketts
Professor of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication
Tennessee State University
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37209

Dear Dr. Ricketts,

As President of the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators (TAAE), I represent the secondary/high school agriculture teachers in this state and I want say that we strongly support the proposed Master of Science (MS) program in Agricultural Business and Leadership at Tennessee State University. Our association believes it is important for teachers to continue their education in programs exactly like the one you are proposing. There is a need for a program that helps teachers with concepts such as program planning, program evaluation, business and management principles, leadership skills, community development, and communications. I believe the program that is being proposed will be very attractive to many of our teachers, especially since there are online and non-thesis options. Most of our educators work with youth from 8-12 hours a day in the regular school year, and we spend most of our summers visiting student Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs and managing the FFA. The flexibility your program will offer is important, and it will help them complete the program on-time. Once our teachers complete a MS like the one being proposed, many will become eligible for pay raises, another important step for many educators if they are to remain in this important career that is experiencing teacher shortages like never before. If it's not clear, we believe this proposed degree program is important and needed. If you or anyone on the review committees has any questions about the support from myself and TAAE, please contact me at pwarfiel@acs.ac.

Sincerely,

Philip Warfield

syngenta.

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Securing better food for the future
2001 Butterfield Road, Ste 1600 Downers Grove, IL 60515
Tel: 1-336-632-6000
www.syngenta.com

January 4, 2023

Dr. Chandra Reddy, Dean
Director of Research and Administrator of Extension
College of Agriculture
Tennessee State University
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd., Nashville TN 37209-1561

Re: Development of Graduate Program in Agricultural Business and Leadership

Dear Dr. Reddy,

On behalf of the Tennessee State University's College of Agriculture Advisory Board I am very pleased to offer this letter demonstrating Syngenta's support for the proposed new degree program in Agricultural Business and Leadership in the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (DAES), College of Agriculture, Tennessee State University. As a Board member, I understand the need for a skilled workforce with specialized training in communication, leadership and agribusiness in the food and agricultural sector at the local, state, and federal levels of the economy, and the private sector. This program is unique and will produce a needed talent of graduates for the agricultural sector of the economy.

The versatile and key leadership skills gained from a Graduate Program in Agricultural Business and Leadership is attractive to employers and aids the student throughout their career in the business field, gaining knowledge on some of the more complicated and difficult aspects of business topics. The Business and Leadership program supports the experience the students will gain on the job to quickly advance them to applying the theory and advancing their careers.

Syngenta has built a 3-year Graduate Development Program within our Commercial, Production & Supply operations that will allow the new graduate the option to gain exposure to various areas of operations management and develop their career. In addition to the individual technical knowledge gained in Syngenta's Development Program, the graduate will also obtain cross-functional leadership, coaching and mentoring as they rotate and gain experience in different areas of operations, communications, marketing, business, and leadership.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Syngenta
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Appendix B: Employment Projections

Table B1. Employment projections (2020-2030) in the neighboring Southern states.

Occupation Name	US		Tennessee		Alabama		Georgia		Louisiana		Mississippi	
	% Change	Av. Annual Openings	% Change	Av. Annual Openings	% Change	Av. Annual Openings	% Change	Av. Annual Openings	% Change	Av. Annual Openings	% Change	Av. Annual Openings
Food Service Managers	14.9	41400	29.8	2240	9.0	470	27.6	1810	12.2	300	24.1	420
Marketing Managers	10.0	28500	25.0	600	9.8	130	14.2	960	9.9	90	9.3	70
Advertising and Promotions Managers	10.3	2500	21.4	70	.0	10	12.9	80	16.7	10	.0	10
Sales Managers	7.0	37000	19.6	870	7.1	280	14.4	1480	10.4	270	6.7	110
Financial Managers	17.3	64200	29.6	1930	18.4	560	27.8	1930	21.8	560	18.4	390
Industrial Production Managers	5.3	13900	17.0	420	13.8	280	12.0	340	7.6	150	4.5	130
Purchasing Managers	6.2	6300	21.6	170	9.8	90	12.5	220	7.7	50	7.5	30
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	8.3	11800	19.2	380	9.0	120	19.1	490	6.2	120	8.5	100
Compensation and Benefits Managers	3.7	1500	14.6	40	.0	10	9.9	60	4.8	20	.0	0
Human Resources Managers	9.2	14800	20.1	450	9.6	150	15.4	610	9.6	130	9.4	60
Training and Development Managers	10.7	4300	22.0	140	8.3	30	14.4	170	12.1	30	16.7	20
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	-.6	84800	2.8	2300	-2.8	2150	9.3	4910	-10.3	230	8.8	720
Edu. Admin., Elementary and Secondary School	7.8	22100	5.0	420	6.6	270	10.8	640	2.4	370	8.6	240
Education Administrators, Postsecondary	7.5	14500	NA	NA	6.5	260	8.2	170	1.9	160	11.3	120