



Letter of Notification (LON)

Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process

Institution: University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Proposed Academic Program: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (PhD)
Proposed Implementation Date: August 2023
CIP Code and Title: 01.0801 (Agricultural and Extension Education Services)

CIP Code Definition:

A program that prepares individuals to provide referral, consulting, technical assistance, and educational services to gardeners, farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses, and other organizations. Includes instruction in basic agricultural sciences, agricultural business operations, pest control, adult education methods, public relations, applicable state laws and regulations, and communication skills.

LON Submission Date: January 24, 2023
Posted Date on THEC Website: January 24, 2023
Public Comment Period: January 25 – February 8, 2023

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 overview;
- ✓ Background information;
- ✓ Feasibility Study;
- ✓ Enrollment and graduation projections;
- ✓ Projected costs to deliver the proposed program;
- ✓ Projected revenues for the proposed program;
- ✓ Letters of support.

Letter of Notification (LON)

Doctor of Philosophy

Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication



Updated 01.06.22

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Section I: Overview

Institution:	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
College:	Herbert College of Agriculture
Department:	Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
Title of Degree:	Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication
Formal Degree Abbreviation:	ALEC
Degree Designation	Ph.D.
CIP/THEC Code:	01.0801
CIP Code Title:	Agricultural and Extension Education Services
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2023
Academic Program Liaisons:	<p>Karen Etzkorn, Director of Academic Affairs 505 Summer Place / UT Tower 1268-B Knoxville, TN 37902 Phone number: 865-974-2104 Email: etzkorn@tennessee.edu</p> <p>Dr. Christopher Stripling Professor & Head, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications 320 Morgan Hall 2621 Morgan Circle Drive Knoxville, TN. 37966-4518 865-974-3344 cstripli@tennessee.edu</p> <p>Dr. Carrie Stephens Professor, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications 114A McCord Hall 2640 Morgan Circle Drive Knoxville, TN. 37966-4500 865-974-4830 cfritz@tennessee.edu</p>



The University of Tennessee
Board of Trustees

Resolution 003-2023

Letter of Notification - Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in
Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture
(University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

Resolved:

The Executive Committee, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, hereby approves the attached Letter of Notification pertaining to the proposed Ph.D. in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication and authorizes the submission of such Letter of Notification to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

Adopted this 20th day of January, 2023.

Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of The University of Tennessee, on the date set forth above.

Cynthia C. Moore
Secretary and Special Counsel

System Letter from AVPAASS



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

November 29, 2022

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

Dear Dr. Roberts:

On behalf of UT Knoxville's Institute of Agriculture, please accept the attached Letter of Notification (LON) for a proposed Ph.D. program in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (CIP 01.0801). The proposed program will empower adult learners to achieve their dreams through accessible advanced education. Online offerings for a majority of the required credit hours is in response to the needs of today's learners. It will advance the well-being of Tennessee communities, including rural and distressed counties, creating opportunities for a more just, prosperous, and sustainable future for the state and beyond. This program can strengthen the workforce by educating more individuals in advanced areas of agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and communications. The program will be the only Ph.D. program in Tennessee with an emphasis on Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication. The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture will utilize existing campus resources and additional requested resources to develop the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication doctoral degree program. We look forward to receiving an evaluation of the LON by THEC staff.

Sincerely,

Bernie Savarese, Ed.D.
Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Success
University of Tennessee System

CC: Donde Plowman
John Zomchick
Carrie Castille
John Stier
Chris Stripling
Carrie Stephens
Heather Hartman
Karen Etzkorn

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Letter from UTK Campus Provost or Chancellor



December 5, 2022

Dear President Boyd,

I am pleased to provide my full support for the proposal to create a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This proposal has been making its way through the campus curricular approval process without any difficulty. We are asking for BOT and THEC approvals so that we can add the PhD in ALEC to our inventory of programs for fall 2023.

Chancellor Plowman and I are excited to add the Doctor of Philosophy in ALEC to our campus inventory. We fully anticipate that this program will be a success and will benefit students for many years to come.

Sincerely,

John Zomchick
Provost & Senior Vice Chancellor

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
527 Andy Holt Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996-0152
865-974-2445 865-974-4811 fax provostutk.edu

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System

Section II: Background

Background Concerning Academic Program Development

The mission of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC) is to serve Tennesseans, our nation, and the world by (1) equipping current and future generations of educators, leaders, and communicators through agriculture; (2) establishing strategic partnerships with communities and industry; (3) seeking solutions through scholarship; and (4) developing and delivering innovative outreach and Extension programs that deliver Real. Life. Solutions. Currently, the ALEC department offers Bachelor of Science (BS) and Master of Science (MS) degrees and is proposing a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication. Students who enroll in the Ph.D. degree program would select courses in consultation with their supervisory committee from content areas including Extension, leadership, education, communication, youth and adult development, research methods, statistics, psychology, sociology, and other undergirding disciplines (see support letters in Appendix B). Students completing this degree would then be markable to agriculture and natural resource industries; public and private education institutions; communication, cooperate, and business sectors; and governmental and public service agencies.

In August 2016, the ALEC Department underwent a comprehensive external review. The review team was asked to address, among other items, the potential for a Ph.D. program in the department. In its report, the review team concluded:

Pursue research FTEs for the department. This will enhance the unit in several ways. It could strengthen the graduate program; allow greater participation in grants; provide recognition of ALEC's contribution to the research mission of UTIA; increase resources, collaboration, and accountability for scholarship; and enhance the department's national and international reputation. Develop a timeline for adding a Ph.D. program. This is a longer-term but achievable goal. The department has an opportunity to develop a unique program focused on extension education and youth development.

Follow-up discussion with UTK/UTIA administrators has also encouraged the initiation of a Ph.D. program in the department, also identified during the department's strategic planning session in 2020. Based on the 2016 review and 2020 strategic planning session, the ALEC department began the beginning processes of developing this LON. In August 2021, the ALEC department underwent another comprehensive external review, which strongly supported the Ph.D. initiative. In addition to the external reviews and strategic planning session, program design, course requirements, and delivery, implementation dates, demand, and need for the program, student recruitment strategies, and similar aspects of the new program have been discussed with peers, prospective students, and external constituency groups. These individuals are supportive and enthusiastic about the new program.

Compared to similar programs at other institutions, the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at The University of Tennessee is unique in terms of its breadth of teaching, research, and Extension faculty members. The faculty are diverse and well-established in their areas of expertise. The department currently offers more than 20 graduate courses in the

areas of agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and Communication to assist in completing the MS degree in ALEC and provide opportunities for students in other graduate programs to develop leadership, pedagogical, and communication knowledge and skills. ALEC's goal is to add a Ph.D. program complementing our BS and MS degrees. ALEC also intends to offer the Ph.D. with departmental and institutional efficiency in mind. As a result, ALEC plans to utilize foundational already developed graduate courses and strategically add new ALEC courses with more depth and specialized knowledge.

Purpose and Nature of the Proposed Program

This proposed Ph.D. program will require 72 graduate credit hours beyond the Bachelor's degree or 48 graduate credit hours beyond the Master's degree. Students will complete 24 credit hours of dissertation research credit to be counted toward the Ph.D. course requirements and a minimum of 6 credit hours at the 600-level. In addition, students must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours in graduate-level research methods and statistics coursework. For the remaining credit hours, students will complete ALEC specialization course credit hours chosen in consultation with their supervisory committee. The supervisory committee will consider the student's prior coursework and professional goals to build robust ALEC knowledge and skills. Given this degree structure, full-time students with a master's degree in a related field will be expected to complete the Ph.D. degree program in three to four years. Standard UT Graduate School procedures regarding the supervisory committee, period of concentrated study, qualifying exam, and defense will be followed. Also, with the increasing availability of online courses at UT, most of the required credit hours can be completed online. We envision offering a completely online option as more online courses become available. An online completion option will complement ALEC's online BS and MS programs, increase access to higher education in Tennessee, and create additional opportunities for distressed counties and underserved communities.

Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission

State Master Plan

The State Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education 2015-2025 directs higher education to:

- Be accountable for increasing the educational attainment levels of Tennesseans while also addressing the state's economic development, workforce development, and research needs;
- Ensure increased degree production within the state's capacity to support higher education; and
- Use institutional mission differentiation to realize statewide efficiencies through institutional collaboration and minimize redundancy in degree offerings, instructional locations, and competitive research.

The State Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education 2015-2025 emphasizes certificate training and undergraduate education at the center of the state's college completion policy agenda for 2015-2025. However, the state "continues to acknowledge 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.”¹

To contribute to the State Master Plan, the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications prepares students to work in high-demand fields and undersupplied occupations across agriculture and related areas within Tennessee and beyond. The proposed doctoral degree will support the state’s student success, family prosperity, and future work goals by providing an opportunity for adults to reengage in higher education, complete an advanced degree, prepare for the work of the future, and increase their earning potential in Tennessee’s evolving economy. The ALEC Ph.D. program will provide advanced research-based expertise to students in agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and Communication. The expertise gained will prepare students for higher-demanding employment and occupations, supported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS). The data from BLS consistently shows that education increases opportunity in terms of dollars, and “the more you learn, the more you earn.” The BLS states, “Median weekly earnings in 2017 for those with the highest levels of educational attainment—doctoral and professional degrees—were more than triple those with the lowest level.” ALEC’s advanced areas of expertise can be applied to a broader education, business, governmental, and public agency settings while attracting students from rural and urban communities with varied academic expertise and backgrounds seeking strategic leadership, pedagogical, research, and communication skills in an evolving economy.

The University of Tennessee Institutional Mission and Vision

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is *a diverse community committed to discovery, creativity, learning, and engagement*. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville:

- **Empowers** learners of all ages and backgrounds to achieve their dreams through accessible and affordable education and state-of-the-art research training opportunities;
- **Advances** the prosperity, well-being, and vitality of communities across Tennessee and around the world through our research, teaching, service, engagement, and
- **Commits** to excellence, equity, and inclusion within the university, across the state, and in all our global activities.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, cultivates the Volunteer experience by demonstrating leadership in providing educational opportunities for people at every stage of life, whenever and wherever they seek to learn. These efforts are to:

- **Provide** learners at all levels with opportunities to engage in rich learning and in scholarship that is collaborative, inquiry-based, experiential, affordable, and relevant;
- **Deliver** educational opportunities that are responsive to the needs of learners;
- **Support** curricular innovations that align with 21st-century workforce needs and our research strengths and priorities, and
- **Ensure** that our programs are accessible to communities across Tennessee and beyond.

¹ Postsecondary attainment in the decade of decision: The master plan for Tennessee postsecondary education 2015-2025, p. 2

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is committed to the *2021 Strategic Vision*. The vision means a long-term commitment to research excellence, defined as follows:

Advance the frontiers of knowledge to create a more just, prosperous, and sustainable future through world-class research, scholarship, and creative work. The commitment areas are:

- **Strengthen** the impact and reputation of our research, scholarship, and creative activities.
- **Ensure** that our research outcomes generate a more just, prosperous, and sustainable future.
- **Invest** in state-of-the-art research infrastructure and frameworks to ensure that our researchers, scholars, and creatives continue to work at the knowledge frontier.

The ALEC Ph.D. program will support UT's mission and vision in several ways. The program will empower adult learners to achieve their dreams through accessible advanced education. The online availability of a majority of the required credit hours is in response to the needs of today's learners. It will advance the well-being of all communities, including rural and distressed counties, creating opportunities for a more just, prosperous, and sustainable future for Tennesseans and beyond. This will be done by providing a new educational opportunity (Ph.D.) that can strengthen the workforce by educating more individuals in advanced areas of agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and Communication. Additionally, the Ph.D. program will build upon and allow the ALEC department to strengthen its research, scholarship, and creative activities. Much of this research is devoted to workforce development, equity and inclusion, and understanding technologies, practices, and adoption decisions in agricultural and natural resource industries. Elevating and strengthening ALEC's research capabilities will contribute to the university remaining at the frontier of knowledge creation and dissemination.

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture Vision

The vision of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) is to create Real. Life. Solutions. UTIA accomplishes this vision by (1) preparing students to make a difference, (2) discovering knowledge that impacts real-world issues, and (3) connecting with people and communities to help them prosper. UTIA serves the people of Tennessee and beyond through its colleges, research and education centers, and county extension offices through the discovery, communication, and application of knowledge. UTIA, working with The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is committed to providing undergraduate, graduate, and professional education programs in a diverse learning environment that prepares students to be leaders in a global society. UTIA's delivery of education, discovery, and outreach contributes to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of all Tennesseans. It focuses on contemporary problems faced by Tennessee, the nation, and the world. In conjunction with the UTIA vision, the proposed ALEC Ph.D. program will:

1. Attract a diverse, high-quality student population;
2. Prepare graduates who are recognized for their breadth in academic and career skills, disciplinary expertise, creative problem-solving abilities, and high standards of professional and scholarly excellence;

3. Prepare graduates for domestic and international academic, administrative, research, and leadership positions in the public and private sectors;
4. Contribute to and further advance existing teaching, research, and Extension programs offered in the department;
5. Advance the body of knowledge in agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and Communication; and
6. Foster the application of new knowledge to address state, national, and international problems.

The department can achieve the goals stated above. Current enrollment in the department's master's degree program is robust—graduating more than 20 students annually for the last five years—and continues to grow. State and national networks should ensure equal success at the Ph.D. level. Faculty and student research have focused on solving significant problems in many areas of the broad field of agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and Communication. The Ph.D. program will enable the department's research efforts to have an even more significant impact on theory and applications in the field. Faculty quality and expertise, strong relationships with constituent groups, diverse course offerings, and effective faculty research programs will support a Ph.D. program and advance both department and university agendas for high-quality graduate education.

Institutional Capacity for Program Delivery

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is a land-grant institution and is part of the University of Tennessee System, along with UT Chattanooga, UT Martin, the UT Health Science Center, and UT Southern. The University of Tennessee is the state's largest and most comprehensive institution. It is classified as producing very high research activity by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Doctoral Universities R1 category). The University of Tennessee is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. As the state's flagship institution, The University of Tennessee ranks among the top-tier public research universities and attracts more than \$250 million in research awards annually.

Ph.D. Program Delivery

The Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications will administer the proposed degree program. ALEC is a leading department for The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture in teaching and research and received the 2021 National Association of Agricultural Educators' *Outstanding Postsecondary Agriculture Program* award. The proposed Ph.D. program will enhance the overall capacity of the institution by providing research-based Ph.D. courses for the department and other academic units to utilize within their programs. Also, collaborative efforts between ALEC and other academic units will be created to provide more robust research for Ph.D. students. The Ph.D. program will also allow faculty to remain highly active in regional and national research conferences and regularly publish their work in leading journals in the field.

The new degree program will be a hybrid with on-campus and online instruction. Students who will be on GRA or GTA appointments in ALEC (which will be created by moving some existing GRA and GTA appointments from the master's level in ALEC to the doctoral level) will be

expected to complete their coursework on the Knoxville campus. However, students who are not on GRA or GTA appointments may choose the hybrid option (a combination of on-campus and online offerings) except for the required statistics credit hours, which are currently only offered face-to-face. ALEC envisions offering a completely online option if the required statistics credit hours become available online. The department currently offers an online master's degree program with more than 20 graduate courses in agricultural and natural resource Extension, teaching and learning, leadership, youth development, and Communication. Additional supporting coursework for this new program is available from other colleges at the University.

In order to support the new Ph.D. program, resources will be allocated from the Herbert College of Agriculture to include a 60% appointment of Dr. Brent Lamons (in addition to our current faculty). The new faculty position included mentoring/advising graduate students, teaching additional graduate courses, and other graduate responsibilities as needed. Teaching, research, and extension efforts of current faculty in the department are complementary and demonstrate cooperation that increases overall efficiency and productivity. With the new additional faculty member and current faculty members, graduate courses will be added for Ph.D. students, and current courses will continue to be revised as appropriate to ensure excellent scope and quality. Currently, the department offers 22 500-level courses and will add five more 600-level courses for Ph.D. students. Additionally, the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences, College of Communications and Information Sciences, and the College of Arts and Sciences have courses that will be utilized in the Ph.D. program of study to prevent course redundancy and create instructional and resource efficiency (see support letters).

Recruitment of Students

There is a robust pool of potential students within and outside of the Herbert College of Agriculture at The University of Tennessee and students from degree programs in other Tennessee universities (see Appendix D). The Herbert College of Agriculture has an undergraduate and graduate program enrollment of over 1,700 students. Both sets of students provide ample populations to recruit for the Ph.D. program. ALEC is interwoven into all academic programs currently offered in the College. In addition, several institutions within Tennessee have leadership, education, and communication emphasis at the undergraduate and master's levels, which will also be recruited for the Ph.D. program. Beyond Tennessee, several institutions listed in Appendix D have bachelor's and master's programs similar to ALEC, and those students would be considered for the Ph.D. program. The departmental faculty will also target middle and high school agricultural education and science teachers, community college educators, agribusiness professionals, Extension agents, communication specialists, administrators, and agency directors.

Existing Programs in Tennessee

The existing programs at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in **Table 1**, provide bachelor's and master's degrees that could provide a pipeline of students coming into the Ph.D. program. The ALEC department is graduating more than 20 MS students/per year. The expectation is that three students a year will be admitted to the Ph.D. program with a gradual increase in total enrollment each year. Table 2 outlines other programs at The University of Tennessee and Tennessee universities where students will be recruited for the Ph.D. program.

A recent national analysis completed by the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications revealed that 17 land grant institutions have doctoral programs in a field similar to the proposed program. The proposed Ph.D. program will not duplicate the efforts of other colleges in Tennessee but will provide an opportunity to further the education of their graduates. While there are doctoral programs in Tennessee in the field of Agriculture, no other Ph.D. programs in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication exist in Tennessee (see Appendix D).

Table 1.

Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication Programs in Tennessee

Institution Name	Program Title and Degree Designation	CIP Code	Description/ Focus of Program	Miles from UT Campus	Degrees Awarded for Last 3 Years
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication, MS	01.01.0801.00	Specifically designed to deliver research-based concentrations in four areas—agricultural education, agricultural extension education, agricultural leadership, and agricultural communications.	at UTK	20 degrees in 2020-2021 26 degrees in 2019-2020 21 degrees in 2018-2019
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication, BSAG	01.01.0801.00	It provides an opportunity for students to complete concentrations in four different areas—agricultural education, agricultural extension education, agricultural leadership, and agricultural communications.	at UTK	22 degrees in 2020-2021 14 degrees in 2019-2020 20 degrees in 2018-2019

Table 2.

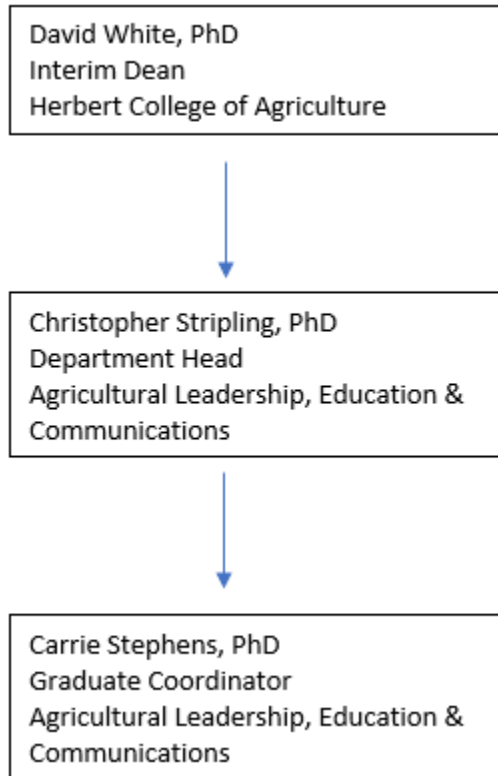
Potential Feeder Programs from the University of Tennessee and other Tennessee Universities

Institution Name	Program Title/Major and Degree Designation	CIP Code
Austin Peay State University	General Agriculture, BS	01.01.0000.00
Austin Peay State University	Communication Media, BA, BS	05.09.0401.00
Austin Peay State University	Education, BS	08.13.1206.00
Austin Peay State University	Educational Leadership, EdD	08.13.0401.00
Austin Peay State University	Educational Leadership Studies, MAEd	08.13.0401.00
Austin Peay State University	Leadership and Organizational Administration, MSL	16.24.0102.01
Austin Peay State University	Leadership Science, BS	16.24.0102.02
East Tennessee State University	Communication Studies, BA, BS	15.23.1304.00
East Tennessee State University	Educational Leadership, MEd, EdS, EdD	08.13.0401
Middle Tennessee State University	Administration & Supervision, MED in Agricultural Education Leadership	08.13.0401.00
Middle Tennessee State University	Agribusiness, BS	01.01.0102.00
Middle Tennessee State University	Agricultural Science, BS, MS	01.01.0000.00
Middle Tennessee State University	Animal Science, BS	01.01.0901.00
Middle Tennessee State University	Environmental Science, BS	09.15.0303.00
Middle Tennessee State University	Plant & Soil Science, BS	01.01.1101.00
Middle Tennessee State University	Communication, BA, BS	05.09.0101.00
Tennessee State University	Agricultural Science, BS, MS	01.01.0000.01
Tennessee State University	Environmental Science, MS	01.03.0104.00
Tennessee State University	Communication, BA, BS	05.09.0100.00
Tennessee State University	Education Leadership, EdD	08.13.0401.00
Tennessee Technological University	Agriculture, BSAG	01.01.0000.00
Tennessee Technological University	Animal Science, BS	01.01.0901.00
Tennessee Technological University	Food and Animal Science, MS	01.01.9999.00
Tennessee Technological University	Communication, BS	05.09.9999.00
University of Memphis	Communication, BA, MA	05.09.0102.00
University of Memphis	Education, EdS	08.13.0101.00
University of Memphis	Leadership & Policy Studies, MS, EdD	08.13.0401.00
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	Environmental Science, BS, MS	01.03.0104.00
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	Communication, BS	05.09.0100.00
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	Leadership & Instructional Practice, EdD	08.13.0401.00
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Communication and Information, MS	05.09.0102.00
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Communication Studies, BAC	05.09.0101.00
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Education, BS, MS, EdS	08.13.0101.00
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Educational Administration, MS	08.13.0401.00
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Educational Leadership, EdD	08.13.0401.00
University of Tennessee, Martin	General Agriculture, BSAG	01.01.0000.00
University of Tennessee, Martin	Agriculture & Natural Resources, MSANR	01.01.0101.00

Accreditation

There are no accrediting agencies appropriate for this program.

Administrative Structure



Section III: Feasibility Study

Student Interest

The Ph.D. program will be the only Ph.D. program in Tennessee with an emphasis on Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication. The other programs in Tennessee only offer Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degree programs. The department receives approximately 20 requests annually regarding the opportunity to complete a Ph.D. from within Tennessee and throughout the southeast. To substantiate the requests, a survey was sent out to former and current ALEC MS students about the need for a Ph.D. program. The results can be found in **Table 3**, listed below. In addition, open-ended comments related to the Ph.D. program were requested, and a representative sample of those comments can be found in Table 4. Current and former students agreed that a Ph.D. program in ALEC is warranted and needed.

Table 3.

Interest in Ph.D. Program in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) from Current and Former Students

Item	Total	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe UT should offer a doctoral program in ALEC.	79	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	17.7% (14)	12.7% (10)	68.4% (54)
I would be interested in learning more about this program.	79	2.5% (2)	3.8% (3)	12.7% (10)	30.4% (24)	50.6% (40)
I think others I know would be interested in exploring this program.	79	1.3% (1)	1.3% (1)	20.3% (16)	32.9% (26)	44.3% (35)
A new doctoral program at UTIA would raise UT Knoxville's visibility.	79	1.3% (1)	2.5% (2)	8.9% (7)	26.6% (21)	60.8% (48)
If offered, I believe this program would be successful.	79	1.3% (1)	1.3% (1)	17.7% (14)	24.1% (19)	55.7% (44)

Table 4.

Sample of Written Comments from Current and Former Students on a Ph.D. Program in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

By offering these terminal degrees, I feel the ALEC reach will be broadened throughout the state and region, allowing students to be more active and immersed in research-based initiatives.
It is necessary at an R1 university.
Having an accessible doctoral program at the flagship campus within the state would make higher education more readily available to lower SES students.
The program should have an online option to attract potential students worldwide.
I might get my Ph.D. if offered.
Leadership, education, and communication are essential to agriculture and need experts to help advance the agriculture industry. A new Ph.D. program will help do that.
This program would be a major asset to ALEC students that want to further their studies in their specific interest concentrations (ex., ag leadership, ag education, ag extension education, ag communications, etc.).

Feasibility for the proposed program was assessed by reviewing current literature related to ALEC and surveying former students and regional and state employees working in ALEC-related professions.

School-Based Agricultural Education

One area of need is school-based agricultural education, as there is a strong need for agricultural education programs throughout the country. The National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study (Foster, Lawver, and Smith (2021) documented:

As of September 15, 2020, state supervisors reported 8,466 high school-based agricultural education programs employing 13,253.5 teachers. Of the total number of teachers, 1,476 were considered new hires in school-based agricultural education (SBAE). Additional teachers were still needed to meet demand in school-based agricultural education; state supervisors reported 51 full-time and 2 part-time vacancies as of September 15, 2020. Further, substantial growth and expansion in school-based agricultural education occurred in 2020-2021, with 242 new positions and 140 new programs added. Despite program growth, 31 states reported a loss of programs or positions. A total of 77 positions were lost, and 50 programs closed. Respondents reported a total of 673 school-based

*agricultural educators who taught in the 2019-2020 school year would not be returning to the classroom in 2020-2021.*²

One reason school-based agricultural education teachers do not return to the classroom is compensation, as higher salaries can be found within and outside the agriculture industry with the skills ALEC graduates possess. Typically, certified teachers are paid based on years of experience and degrees held. An ALEC Ph.D. would complement our master's degree and provide an additional opportunity for certified school-based agricultural education teachers to advance their professional skills and compensation value as classroom teachers. The potential for higher compensation may encourage more school-based agricultural education teachers to remain in the classroom. This finding is relevant because, according to the National Academies of Sciences, school-based agricultural education is one key element to facing the complicated set of problems and opportunities before us as climate change and the "growing world population exerts a looming pressure on the global food supply."

Local and Regional Need/Demand

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides estimates of occupational employment and annual wages based on data collected from employers. In the U.S. in 2019, the median wage for workers with an agriculture degree is \$52,000, 42% of those employed are in occupations requiring at least a bachelor's degree, and 27% of those employed have an advanced degree. While the metrics do not address the specific fields in agricultural leadership, education, and Communication, there are many occupations, both existing and developing, that require the understanding of how agriculture and natural resources impact lives through the quality and abundance of our food supply, personal health, the environment, the economy, and national security. Continued education, research, innovation, and leadership development in agriculture and natural resources directly impact our local and regional economy. Therefore, the Ph.D. program in ALEC can provide an opportunity to educate individuals for education and leadership positions to help meet the local and regional demand in agriculture and natural resources, and related occupations.

Employer Need/Demand

The demand for graduates in this field exceeds the annual production of graduates from existing programs. Over the last year, there have been several new hires of assistant professors, and the demand for more assistant professors is growing due to increases in retirements. According to Employment Opportunities for College Graduates report, there will be a 10.8% increase in the U.S. labor force between 2012-2022 due to job growth and openings from retirements. Also, according to a report commissioned by the United States Department of Agriculture, approximately 56% of all food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment-related position openings between 2020-2025 are expected to be in education, communication, government services, management, and business. Therefore, educating and developing our future workforce is imperative because there are excellent job opportunities in teaching, research, and

² Foster, D. D., Lawver, R. G., & Smith, A. R., (2021). National Agricultural Education Supply and Demand Study, 2020 Executive Summary. Retrieved from <http://aaaeonline.org/resources/Documents/2020%20NSD%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

administration in private and public sectors, universities, public schools, community colleges, and agricultural and related industries.

A survey of several regional and state employees in Tennessee (e.g., Extension agents, County Extension Directors, UT staff, UT administrators, and agricultural education teachers) revealed that a Ph.D. in ALEC would be highly beneficial to the workforce and is needed (see **Table 5**). In addition, employers provided written comments on the needs and benefits of having a Ph.D. program in ALEC (see Table 6 and support letters).

Table 5.

Interest in a Ph.D. Program in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) from Employers

Item	Total	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe UT should offer a doctoral program in ALEC.	113	1.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	19.5% (22)	28.3% (32)	50.4% (57)
I would be interested in learning more about this program.	113	5.3% (6)	9.7% (11)	23.9% (27)	21.2% (24)	39.8% (45)
I think others I know would be interested in exploring this program.	113	4.4% (5)	0.9% (1)	14.2% (16)	47.8% (54)	32.7% (37)
A new doctoral program at UTIA would raise UT Knoxville's visibility.	113	2.7% (3)	1.8% (2)	15.9% (18)	35.4% (40)	44.3% (50)
If offered, I believe this program would be successful.	113	1.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	16.8% (19)	40.7% (46)	40.7% (46)

Table 6.

Sample of Written Comments from Employers on the Needs and Benefits of a Ph.D. Program in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

If implemented, it would enable the organization to dive deeper into leadership concepts that would improve Extension.
It would be great to have research-based to help move ALEC and Extension to a more forward-thinking.
This doctoral degree could boost the reputation of UTIA. This would also boost the reputation of Extension Agents and Agriculture teachers in Tennessee. The program should provide an opportunity for well-rounded development in youth development, FCS, Agriculture, and community and economic development.
I have been waiting to see something like this for the past 10+ years. The ability of this program to attract quality candidates and to supplement currently established programs is much needed.
I believe an online doctorate program would be a great way for working individuals to complete it easier.
A Ph.D. program would positively impact agricultural knowledge across not only the state of Tennessee but across the nation. Even though I live in Ohio, I have had nothing but positive interactions throughout my Master's program at UT. I would definitely be applying if a Ph.D. could be received at UT. Also, if, by chance, the Ph.D. were somehow feasible to be completed online, I feel it would breed nothing but success for the University of Tennessee.
As a current extension agent who has thought of getting my Ph.D., I would be interested if it was offered in ALEC.
I hope to obtain a Ph.D. in ALEC; however, with no current program, I was disappointed as I'd like to stay in my current position while obtaining it.

Within the scope of Agricultural and Extension Education Services (ALEC CIP Code Title), the most posted job titles and occupations in the southeast region of the United States include Extension Agents, Order Management Specialists, Smart Home Experts, County Extension Agents, Extension Agricultural Agents, Youth Development Professional and Family and Consumer Science Teachers (Emsi Q1 Data Set, March 2022). Of the southeastern states, Tennessee has had the highest number of job postings in Agricultural and Extension Education Services. The Planning and research. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, currently ranks fourth among the top regional institutions supplying the labor market with workers employed in the occupations above (Emsi Q1 Data Set, March 2022). With the additional program, the University of Tennessee will be in a stronger position to prepare more individuals to supply the demonstrated need.

Georgetown University's *Economic Value of College Majors* database reports wages for individuals as a function of educational degrees attained. Wage data for individual employees with "general agriculture" degrees are reported in **Table 7** as a function of degree type (i.e., bachelor's versus graduate) and region (national vs. TN state data). As the table reveals, compared to those

with a bachelor's degree only, median wages for an individual with a graduate degree in agriculture are 28.3% (\$15,000) higher nationwide. This wage premium indicates the value employers place on the skills individuals with advanced agriculture degrees bring to their jobs and thus offers evidence of employers' need for such skills.

Table 7.

Wages for General Agriculture Employees with a Bachelor's versus Graduate Degree

	National Wages			State of Tennessee Wages		
	25 th Percentile	Median	75 th Percentile	25 th Percentile	Median	75 th Percentile
Bachelor's Degree	\$37,000	\$53,000	\$81,000	\$39,000	\$54,000	\$95,000
Graduate Degree	\$45,000	\$68,000	\$104,000	N/A	N/A	N/A

Future Sustainable Need

The proposed Ph.D. program will target middle and high school agricultural education and science teachers, community college educators, agribusiness professionals, Extension agents, communication specialists, administrators, and agency directors. These target groups will be sought in Tennessee and throughout the United States. Not all of these individuals would be interested in coming to the Knoxville campus as full-time students; however, they will have the option to complete the degree by utilizing a hybrid approach consisting of online and on-campus courses. With the increasing availability of online courses at UT, all but two required courses can currently be completed online. We envision offering a completely online option as more online courses become available. An online completion option will complement ALEC's online BS and MS programs, increase access to higher education in Tennessee, and create additional opportunities for distressed counties and underserved communities by allowing individuals to stay employed during their Ph.D. program.

ALEC faculty, academic advisors, and staff will be involved with recruiting Ph.D. students. In addition, professional associations will also be utilized to advertise and recruit for the ALEC Ph.D. program. Furthermore, a strong focus will be on recruiting international students into the Ph.D. program as the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture's Director of the Smith Center for International Sustainable Agriculture is an active tenured faculty member in the ALEC Department. Tennessee's diverse agricultural and natural resources industries and unique capacity to address current and future agricultural issues add to the university's capacity to attract stellar domestic and international students into this program. Several faculty have international projects and will actively recruit international students to be engaged in the program. Moreover, Tennessee's Extension Service is touted as one of the premier organizations in the country, a strength that will attract applicants interested in this area. Faculty, advisors, and staff will also utilize statewide Extension events and conferences to recruit potential Ph.D. students. Employers provide support letters on the increased need for students with advanced skills gained from the

Ph.D. in ALEC. The employer's support indicates the sustainability of such a program after the first seven years.

Community and Industry Partnerships

The department, and proposed Ph.D. program, have support from and will connect with several large public entities. The Tennessee Farm Bureau has 680,000 members and provided a letter of support indicating their interest in the program as it will provide an avenue for Ph.D. students to research the “socioeconomic, personality, and communication and purchasing behaviors of individuals in rural communities.” Such data will help with rural economic development.

The Tennessee Department of Education is supportive of the proposed Ph.D. program due to the lack of a similar program in Tennessee and the opportunities it will provide to Tennesseans. Colleges such as Education, Health and Human Sciences, and Communication and Information at the University of Tennessee already collaborate with the department for educational programs and have provided letters supporting expanding such collaborations into a Ph.D. program. Tennessee State University has also indicated support for the program. Students in their agriculture education program may be good candidates for the proposed Ph.D. program.

UT Extension also sees a substantial benefit of the program to its workforce. UT Extension currently sends about 20 students through the ALEC Masters program; many of these graduates could continue for their Ph.D., raising the level of Extension programming for the state’s citizens.

Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Enrollment will be a combination of graduate assistants hired as either GTAs or GRAs and self-employed-funded students. We expect 30% of students to enter the program from UT ALEC and other master's programs and the remaining 70% in industry or governmental sectors. The department will have ongoing recruitment and special attention for the first six-twelve months. Candidates will be recruited based on ALEC discipline areas and their potential research focus. Three Ph.D. students will be enrolled in Year 1. One as a GA and two self-funded. We will repeat this pattern annually until we have 14 Ph.D. students by year 5. The funding for the GRAs or GTAs will come from converting existing ALEC MS GRA and GTA positions to Ph.D. positions. Reallocation of master assistantships will not have a noticeable effect on MS enrollment. Currently, over 80 students are self-funded. Additional GRA or GTA positions could be funded from faculty grant funds, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Herbert College of Agriculture, UTIA's Smith International Center, UT Extension, UT AgResearch, and tuition dollars generated. Based on historical attrition rates of the college, we expect attrition rates to be below 10%. This Ph.D. program is expected to take three years for students on assistantships. Self-funded students who may be part-time students may average longer than three years to complete. Based on the department's approximately 20 requests received annually, we expect to achieve the projected enrollments.

Table 8

Projected Enrollments and Graduates

Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1	2023-24	3	0	0
2	2024-25	6	0	0
3	2025-26	9	1	1
4	2026-27	12	0	2
5	2027-28	14	0	3

Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture will utilize existing campus resources and additional requested resources to develop the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication doctoral degree program. Recently, the ALEC department added a faculty member (Dr. Brent Lamons) to assist with the graduate program.

Faculty and Instructional Staff

No new costs are associated with the program beyond the recently added faculty member, Brent Lamons.

Non-Instructional Staff

No new costs are associated with the program beyond the current non-instructional staff.

Graduate Assistants

The department will allocate at least four assistantships to the Ph.D. program. The funding for the GRAs or GTAs will come from converting existing ALEC MS GRA and GTA positions to Ph.D. positions. Additional GRA or GTA positions could be funded from faculty grant funds, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Herbert College of Agriculture, UTIA's Smith International Center, UT Extension, UT AgResearch, and tuition dollars generated. GA travel expenses to attend professional meetings and conferences, Extension meetings, and so forth will be provided by the department. The department will allocate \$1,000 per GA for travel.

Accreditation

None. No accrediting agency is appropriate for this program.

Consultants

Two external reviewers will be hired at approximately \$1,500 each.

Equipment

The department plans to spend \$10,000 on computers and related equipment for GAs over the first five years (\$2,500 annually in years 1-4). An additional \$2,000 will be allocated for expendable supplies such as paper, ink, etc.

Information Technology

Two hundred dollars for up to four computers will be needed annually for subscription software.

Library Resources

No new resources are needed.

Marketing

No new resources will be needed for marketing. The department markets our programs through listservs, social media, and websites. UTK is also investing in online marketing programs.

Facilities

No new or renovated facilities are needed.

Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program

Tuition

We expect approximately \$28,000 in year 1. We anticipate growing revenue to \$135,000 by year 5.

Grants

ALEC faculty routinely secure education grants that allow GA support to be incorporated into the budgets and programs.

Other

None

Appendix A: THEC Financial Projection Form

	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
I. Expenditures								
A. One-time Expenditures								
New/Renovated Space								
Equipment								
Library								
Consultants	\$3,000.00							
Travel								
Other								
Subtotal, One-time Expenditures	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
B. Recurring Expenditures								
Personnel Administration								
Salary								
Benefits								
Subtotal Administration	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Faculty								
Salary	\$0.00	\$28,200.00	\$28,764.00	\$29,339.28	\$29,926.07	\$30,524.59	\$31,135.08	\$31,757.78
Benefits	\$0.00	\$11,280.00	\$11,505.60	\$11,735.71	\$11,970.43	\$12,209.83	\$12,454.03	\$12,703.11
Subtotal Faculty	\$0.00	\$39,480.00	\$40,269.60	\$41,074.99	\$41,896.49	\$42,734.42	\$43,589.11	\$44,460.89
Support Staff								
Salary								
Benefits								
Subtotal Support Staff	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Graduate Assistants								
Salary		\$24,000.00	\$48,000.00	\$72,000.00	\$96,000.00	\$96,000.00	\$96,000.00	\$96,000.00
Benefits		\$2,400.00	\$4,800.00	\$7,200.00	\$9,600.00	\$9,600.00	\$9,600.00	\$9,600.00
Subtotal Graduate Assistants	\$0.00	\$26,400.00	\$52,800.00	\$79,200.00	\$105,600.00	\$105,600.00	\$105,600.00	\$105,600.00
Operating								
Equipment	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Marketing								
Recruitment								
Travel	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
Other	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Subtotal Operating	\$0.00	\$5,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$7,500.00	\$8,500.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00
Total Recurring Expenditures	\$0.00	\$71,380.00	\$99,569.60	\$127,774.99	\$155,996.49	\$154,334.42	\$155,189.11	\$156,060.89
Total Expenditures	\$3,000.00	\$71,380.00	\$99,569.60	\$127,774.99	\$155,996.49	\$154,334.42	\$155,189.11	\$156,060.89
Graduate Assistants								
Base Tuition and Fees Rate	\$0.00	\$17,784.00	\$36,279.36	\$54,419.04	\$72,558.72	\$72,558.72	\$72,558.72	\$72,558.72
Number of Graduate Students	1	1	2	3	4	4	4	4
II. Revenue								
Tuition and Fees		\$28,626.00	\$58,397.04	\$87,595.56	\$116,794.08	\$134,762.40	\$134,762.40	\$134,762.40
Gifts								
Institutional Reallocations								
Total Revenue	\$0.00	\$28,626.00	\$58,397.04	\$87,595.56	\$116,794.08	\$134,762.40	\$134,762.40	\$134,762.40

Faculty calculations assume 40% benefits and 2% raise each year.

GA Tuition assumes 9 credit hours in Fall and Spring semesters, and 6 credit hours in Summer; assumes 2% increase in tuition costs each year.

Appendix B: Industry and Academic Letters of Support



TENNESSEE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

April 18, 2022

Dr. Christopher Stripling
University of Tennessee
Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications
320 Morgan Hall, 2621 Morgan Circle
Knoxville, TN 37996-4511

To Whom it May Concern:

As agriculture expands and adapts to meet the everchanging world around us, individuals with a high level of expertise in leadership, education and communications are vital to the future success of our most important industry. Thankfully, the University of Tennessee's Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications, within the Herbert College of Agriculture and the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, is utilizing research-based educational experiences to prepare students to lead this effort. The department's proposal for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree will add great value to this endeavor and further the knowledge and experience of students eager to make a difference in agriculture.

Farmers are the backbone of Tennessee agricultural production, but agricultural education teachers, agribusiness professionals, Extension agents, communication specialists and many others are crucial to ensure farmers can continue to provide food, fiber and fuel for the world. U.S. demand for college graduates with degrees and expertise in agriculture and natural resource disciplines is expected to exceed the number of available graduates by nearly forty percent between 2020 and 2025, according to a National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) report. We are confident this proposed doctoral degree will ensure we are preparing students to meet the employment demands. With a focus on teaching, leadership development, communications, Extension and youth development and international human development, the PhD program will concentrate on what we believe will carry agriculture towards a successful future.

In Tennessee, impressive agricultural educators and communicators combined with a stellar Extension service provide great opportunity for students seeking a higher education degree in this field. We believe as the land grant institution of the state, the University of Tennessee will be the perfect fit for this degree program and will benefit employers, organizations, agriculturalists and many others in the state of Tennessee and across the country.

We support this UTIA proposal for a PhD degree in agricultural leadership, education and communications and urge the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to approve it. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Mayberry".

Eric Mayberry
President



April 4, 2022

Dr. Christopher Stripling
Professor & Head, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
University of Tennessee
320 Morgan Hall
2621 Morgan Circle Drive
Knoxville, TN. 37966-4518
865-974-7371

Dear Dr. Stripling,

I am excited to write a letter of support for your proposed Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC). This advanced degree will provide formal and nonformal educators including our 6-12 agricultural education teachers the opportunity to continue their professional development. The advanced knowledge, skills, and research competencies obtained by completing an ALEC Ph.D. will enhance our secondary classrooms and prepare individuals to assume educational and industry leadership roles. The degree should also be attractive to students with a variety of experiences and educational backgrounds such as rural and urban communities and individuals from the public and private sectors.

The ALEC program has an impressive group of faculty from across the United States that delivers high-quality student experiences. This is evident by your program receiving the Outstanding Postsecondary Program Award from the National Association of Agricultural Educators and the innovative professional development programs that have been funded by USDA for secondary science and agriculture teachers.

I am hopeful your proposal is approved and am willing to assist you and your department in promoting the new degree and serve as an external advisory resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven W. Gass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" being more prominent.

Mr. Steve W. Gass
Program Manager, Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
Tennessee Department of Education

April 22, 2022

Dr. Christopher Stripling
Professor & Head
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
University of Tennessee
320 Morgan Hall
2621 Morgan Circle Drive
Knoxville, TN. 37966-4518
865-974-7371

Dr. Stripling,

UT Extension's mission is to help Tennesseans improve their quality of life and solve problems through the application of research and evidence-based knowledge about agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community development. With that in mind, I enthusiastically support the proposed Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) as this program supports our mission and will provide opportunities for our employees to develop expertise and skills that will help us improve the lives of Tennesseans.

As part of our employee benefits, UT Extension provides employees the opportunity to take academic courses and pursue advanced degrees. Approximately, 20 UT Extension employees are enrolled in ALEC's Master of Science program, and I foresee our employees also taking advantage of the ALEC Ph.D. to develop higher levels of expertise and effectiveness. The proposed Ph.D. program will provide a means for us to continue to develop our human capital, and the academic and research requirements of the program will enable our employees to enhance their educational program design and evaluation skills and be a catalyst for innovation.

To that end, the ALEC program is a leader in educational innovation within the University of Tennessee. ALEC's expertise in teaching and learning, communication, and leadership were invaluable as the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture pivoted during COVID-19. With the help of ALEC, UT Extension was able to effectively deliver educational programming online, develop virtual communities of practice, and create a clearinghouse of digital 4-H programming resources. I have seen firsthand the dedication of the ALEC faculty and know graduates of the proposed PhD program will enhance the agriculture industry and make a difference in our local Tennessee communities.

I support the proposed Ph.D. and recommend approval of the program.

Sincerely,



Ashley M. Stokes, DVM, PhD, MBA
Dean & Professor

April 22, 2022

Dr. Christopher Stripling
Professor & Department Head
The University of Tennessee
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
320 Morgan Hall, 2621 Morgan circle Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-4511



Dear Dr. Stripling,

Farm Credit Mid-America is committed to securing the future of rural communities and agriculture. Fostering and developing the next generation of educated professionals is critical for the continued strength of American agriculture.

Our Association is pleased to support the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication's (ALEC) proposal for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in ALEC.

The proposed focus areas in the new PhD program of Teaching and Learning, Leadership Development, Communications, Extension and Youth Development, as well as International Human Development align well with the operational needs of agricultural cooperatives like ours.

We understand the value of hiring team members with relevant experience and dedicated expertise across multiple disciplines. Subject-matter experts not only bring innovative ideas to Association operations, but most importantly, add strategic value to our customers' lives through research-based guidance.

Supporting rural communities and agriculture means supporting the next generation of agricultural professionals. We believe the proposed PhD program in ALEC is an excellent opportunity to enrich and empower the future leaders of agriculture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim Williams". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim Williams
Senior Vice President
Farm Credit Mid-America





Farm Bureau Health Plans
147 Bear Creek Pike
PO Box 313
Columbia, TN 38402-0313
877-874-8323
fbhealthplans.com

Dr. Christopher Stripling
University of Tennessee: Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
2621 Morgan Circle, 320 Morgan Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996

September 6, 2022

Dear Dr. Stripling,

I am very pleased that ALEC is planning to implement a doctoral program. For many years I have been interested in pursuing a doctoral degree for a specific area of research but have not found a program that offered the right mixture of integrity, research, and flexibility. An ALEC PhD program would be a seamless fit of flexibility and applicability for the research I have in mind.

At Farm Bureau Health Plans, we offer health coverage targeted specifically at rural and agricultural areas of the state. My master's research (M.S., Ag Economics) was in the broad area of economic development in rural areas of Tennessee. Studying the systematic underpinnings that foster economic development made me realize that an economic analysis of decision making allows for public and economic policies to be tailored to suit specific goals. Much like interest in the drivers of economic development, I am fascinated with the consumer purchase decision processes of healthcare, whether directly purchasing healthcare or purchasing health insurance. Thus, my area of research interest is the *price elasticity of healthcare in rural areas*.

The economic outcomes of rural communities are directly tied to the health outcomes of those communities. Health outcomes are most often driven by individual lifestyles and, more pertinently, individual choices of community members. Those individual healthcare choices are heavily influenced by economic considerations (i.e., price). If the elasticity of healthcare prices can be ascertained, then healthcare uptake can be improved. Better healthcare uptake results in better healthcare outcomes, which results in better economic outcomes.

Due to its applied nature, the proposed ALEC PhD program is an ideal context for studying the socioeconomic, personality, and communication and purchasing behaviors of individuals in rural communities. Conducting this research under the guidance of experienced researchers in ALEC will assure that research parameters are well matched with the data needs, as well as assure that the outcomes are communicated in a way to develop subsequent research and application into rural economic development.

The ALEC PhD program will fill a need in Tennessee by increasing our state's capacity for applied research that is not detached from the average household. Investigating social systems through an applied leadership, education, and communication lens increases our chances of discoveries that may lead to improvements in public health, our workforce, and rural and underserved communities.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Sanders", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Benjamin Sanders
Executive Director of Government Affairs, Farm Bureau Health Plans

September 7, 2022

Dr. Christopher Stripling
Professor and Head
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
320 Morgan Hall
2621 Morgan Circle
Knoxville, TN 37996

Dear Dr. Stripling,

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed PhD program in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

I recently heard news of the proposed program and was immediately interested in the possibilities it could potentially represent. As a faculty member in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UT Knoxville engaged in a 100% teaching appointment, the opportunity to pursue a terminal degree in this field of study has many potential benefits for my students and me. The academic rigor of a program of this type has the potential to bring about personal growth, new skills, and innovative thinking that will no doubt increase my efficacy as an educator.

I strongly support the creation of this program, and I look forward to discussing these possibilities with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Walton
Senior Lecturer and Undergraduate Director
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
865-386-6702
jcwalton@utk.edu



July 13, 2022

Christopher Stripling, PhD
Professor and Head
ALEC Department
University of Tennessee
320 Morgan Hall, 2621 Morgan Circle
Knoxville, TN 37996-4511

Dear Dr. Stripling,

I am happy to submit this letter of support for the PhD in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications in your department at the University of Tennessee. The highly qualified group of professors in the ALEC Department are viewed around the country as some of the most competent in the profession, and the need for this type of program in Tennessee and across the Southern Region is great. Therefore, I strongly recommend this program be approved in Tennessee. In addition, My ALEC faculty at Tennessee State University offer our assistance in program development and delivery just as UTK ALEC has done the same for us and our programs in all areas of the land-grant system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John C. Ricketts".

John C. Ricketts, PhD
Professor of Agricultural Education
Tennessee State University
jricket1@tnstate.edu
615-630-0526 - Phone



July 7, 2022

Carrie Stephens, PhD
Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communications
UT Institute of Agriculture
University of Tennessee

Dear Carrie,

The College of Communication & Information (CCI) is fully supportive of the proposed PhD Program in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications.

CCI will provide seats in courses, as appropriate, for UTIA students to take electives in communication and information to support their learning and research endeavors.

We look forward to the success of the new PhD program.

Sincerely,

Joseph P. Mazer
Dean

Office of the Dean
College of Communication & Information
302 Communications Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-0332
865-974-3031 865-974-3896 fax cci.utk.edu

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 



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**BIG ORANGE.
BIG IDEAS.**
Flagship Campus of the
University of Tennessee System 

July 7, 2022

Carrie Stephens, PhD
Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communications
UT Institute of Agriculture
University of Tennessee

Dear Carrie,

The College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences (CEHHS) is fully supportive of the proposed PhD Program in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications. CEHHS has had a long successful relationship with UTIA through agriculture education programs, which will continue via the new PhD program.

Our education departments will provide seats in courses, as appropriate, for UTIA students to take electives in education to support their learning and research endeavors.

We continue to be pleased with our partnership and look forward to the success of the new PhD program.

Sincerely,



Ellen McIntyre, Dean
College of Education, Health, and Human

Appendix C: Overview of the UT Institute of Agriculture

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture comprises four units that provide instruction, research, and public service: AgResearch, Herbert College of Agriculture, College of Veterinary Medicine, and UT Extension. AgResearch is an integral partner in teaching programs throughout the Institute.

- **AgResearch** faculty conduct world-class research programs in various areas, including crop breeding and genetics, soil conservation, no-till crop production, cattle reproduction, wood product development, and many others. AgResearch is also a key funding source for graduate assistantships and research that graduate students undertake in their degree programs. The internship program of AgResearch offers undergraduates unparalleled field experience. The unit's ten branch research facilities serve as field laboratories for faculty and students while allowing the public to evaluate research trials and experience gardens and arboretums. Technologies developed by UTIA's researchers benefit producers and consumers alike.
- **The Herbert College of Agriculture** welcomes students from across Tennessee, the nation, and the world. The College offers academic programs in various natural and social science-based disciplines that apply to the food, fiber, and natural resources systems. For Herbert College of Agriculture students, learning is personal and often hands-on. Student teams provide opportunities for self-directed study, leadership development, and much fun. A new honors research and creative achievements program challenges students to excel. International study tours give graduates an edge in the increasingly connected world of global markets.
- **The College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM)** is one of only 30 veterinary colleges nationwide. It is also a national leader in creating a collection of virtual microscope slides that students can access from the convenience of their personal computers. New services in equine sports medicine offer students opportunities, as does the expansion of the college's facilities. The College serves pet owners, zoos, and the livestock industry; it protects public health, enhances medical knowledge, and generates economic benefits to the state and nation. Outreach programs engage many citizens in learning programs that explore the animal-human bond.
- **UT Extension** has an office in every county of Tennessee. Educational programs offered by the University of Tennessee Extension touch the life of every citizen in Tennessee daily. UT Extension delivers research-based programs that improve lives, build stronger families, and strengthen communities. As a partner with local, state, and national agencies and through its statewide presence, Extension provides educational programming and assistance in areas of agriculture, natural resources and resource development, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development.

The goals of the proposed doctoral program are very complementary to the UT mission statement, Institute of Agriculture initiatives, and the Graduate School mission statement cited above.

Appendix D: Other Existing Programs

Table A1.

Other Agriculture, Leadership, Education, and Communication Ph.D. Programs in Tennessee

Institution Name	Program Title/Major and Degree Designation	CIP Code	Degrees Awarded 2020-2021
Tennessee Technological University	Environmental Sciences	01.03.0103.00	1*
University of Memphis	Communication, PhD	05.09.0102.00	2*
UT Knoxville	Agriculture, General	01.00.0000	8*
UT Knoxville	Animal Science, PhD	01.01.0901.00	2*
UT Knoxville	Biosystems Engineering/Soil Science, PhD	09.14.0301.00	3
UT Knoxville	Communication and Information, PhD	05.09.0102.00	6*
UT Knoxville	Education, PhD	08.13.0101.00	12*
UT Knoxville	Entomology, Plant Pathology, and Nematology, PhD	01.01.1105.00	1
UT Knoxville	Food Science, PhD	01.01.1001.00	4*
UT Knoxville	Natural Resources, PhD	01.03.0101.00	3*
UT Knoxville	Plant, Soil and Environmental Sciences, PhD	01.01.0000.00	5

*<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

Table A2.*Similar Ph.D./EdD Programs at Other Land Grant Institutions*

State	University	College	Department/Program (all Ph.D. programs except where noted)
AR	University of Arkansas	Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences	Agricultural Education, Communication and Technology Concentration/ Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences
FL	University of Florida	College of Agricultural and Life Sciences	Agricultural Education and Communication
GA	University of Georgia	College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences	Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication
IA	Iowa State	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	Agricultural Education
IN	Purdue University	College of Agriculture	Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication
LA	Louisiana State University	College of Agriculture	Agricultural and Extension Education
MS	Mississippi State University	School of Human Sciences	Agricultural Sciences with conc. in Agricultural and Extension Education
MO	University of Missouri	College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Agricultural Education and Leadership
NE	University of Nebraska-Lincoln	College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources	Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication - Human Sciences with specialization in Leadership Studies
NC	North Carolina State University	College Agriculture and Life Sciences	Agricultural and Extension Education, Ed.D.
OH	Ohio State University	College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences	Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership
OK	Oklahoma State University	Ferguson College of Agriculture	Agricultural Education, Communication, and Leadership
PA	Pennsylvania State University	College of Agricultural & Life Sciences	Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education/ Education, Development, and Community Engagement
SC	Clemson University	College of Agricultural, Forestry, and Life Sciences	Agricultural Education
TX	Texas A & M University	Gordan W. Davis College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	Agricultural Leadership Education and Communication
VA	Virginia Tech	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	Dept. of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education- Life Sciences Agricultural Education
WV	West Virginia University	Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design	Agricultural and Extension Education

Table A3.*Selected State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Tennessee, May 2020*

Related Occupation	Occupation Code	Largest Employer	Annual Mean Wage
Conservation Scientists	19-1031	Federal, State, and Local Govt, Social Advocacy Orgs., and Management/Scientific/Technical Consulting Services	\$71,960
Environmental Scientists and Specialists, Including Health	19-2041	Management/Scientific/Technical Consulting Services, Social Advocacy Orgs., and Federal, State, and Local Govt	\$68,980
Forestry and Conservation Science Teachers, Postsecondary	25-1043	Colleges, Universities, Professional Schools, Junior Colleges	\$109,690
Environmental Science Teachers, Postsecondary	25-1053	Colleges, Universities, Professional Schools, Junior Colleges	\$80,610
Communications Teachers, Postsecondary	25-1122	Colleges, Universities, Professional Schools, Junior Colleges, Technical and Trade Schools	\$62,500