



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: III. B.

MEETING DATE: July 28, 2022

SUBJECT: New Academic Program
University of Tennessee Health Science Center
Pathologists' Assistant, Master of Health Science (MHS)
CIP Code: 51.0811 (Pathology/Pathologists' Assistant)

ITEM TYPE: Action

ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Approval

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) proposes a Pathologists' Assistant, Master of Health Science (MHS), which will require 76 credit hours and will be offered on-ground. The proposed program is designed to educate individuals to become Pathologists' Assistants that provide surgical, autopsy, and forensic pathology professional services under the guidance of a board-certified pathologist. The program will prepare students to complete the American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification examination for Pathologists' Assistant.

The proposed program will seek accreditation by the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS). Students will learn to examine, process, and prepare tissue specimens for a variety of clinical tests and procedures. Graduates of the proposed program will encounter hands-on learning experiences that will provide the knowledge and skills to competently identify diseases, assist in post-mortem examinations, and compile accurate clinical histories.

INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNING BOARD APPROVAL

The proposed Pathologists' Assistant, MHS program was approved by the University of Tennessee System Board of Trustees on June 23, 2022.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Spring 2023

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE MASTER PLAN AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed Pathologists' Assistant, MHS program aligns with the Tennessee Higher Education Master Plan by adding an attractive graduate program in a high-demand health discipline. Additionally, the proposed program will increase education attainment levels in Tennessee by creating a graduate degree that leads to immediate entry in jobs at hospitals, clinical laboratories, and research and medical facilities.

The proposed program aligns with UTHSC’s institutional mission by preparing students to “Improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans and the global community by fostering integrated, collaborative, and inclusive education, research, scientific discovery, clinical care, and public service.”

CURRICULUM

The proposed program will be delivered on campus and follow a trimester calendar beginning in January of each year. The proposed program consists of 76 semester credit hours. The curriculum in the first year of the program includes a series of primarily didactic courses with supporting laboratories. The curriculum in the second year of the program primarily consists of clinal rotations. The curriculum reflects the breadth, depth, theory, and practice for an entry-level Pathologists’ Assistant and is based on NAACLS accreditation standards. Seventeen courses are being developed and are specific to the proposed Pathologists’ Assistant program.

Student learning objectives for the proposed Pathologists’ Assistant program intends for students to:

- perform anatomic pathology techniques for the preparation, gross description, and dissection of human surgical tissue specimens;
- demonstrate and perform the appropriate non-forensic and forensic autopsy techniques for the recovery, preparation, evisceration, gross description, and dissection of human organs and tissue specimens;
- demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate verbally and in writing;
- demonstrate the ability to manage a pathology laboratory and autopsy service; and
- display an understanding of teaching pedagogy and an ability to clinically train other health professionals.

PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY

The proposed Pathologists’ Assistant, MHS program anticipates an initial enrollment of five students with an annual enrollment of 19 students by year five. Attrition rates are calculated at five percent. The proposed program projects five graduates by year two.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Enrollment	5	10	14	18	19
Graduates	--	5	6	8	9

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

The proposed program will be the first graduate program of its kind in Tennessee and one of 13 Pathologists’ Assistant programs in the US. The program would be of interest to many pre-health science students in this region of the United States.

EXTERNAL JUDGEMENT

An external review of the proposed program was conducted during a virtual institutional site visit on February 9, 2022. VeraLucia Mendes-Kramer, MA, PA(ASCP), Assistant Professor and Program Director of Pathologists’ Assistant Program at Wayne State University served as the external reviewer for the proposed program. The site visit included meetings with campus administrators, faculty, prospective students, and community partners. Director Mendes-Kramer recommended approval for the program and stated, “The faculty and leadership of the UTHSC should be commended for producing a thorough programmatic proposal that

reflects an understanding of an evolving profession impacting health care. The site visit revealed a program with strong administrative support, excellent educational facilities, robust resources for student success and faculty professional development, and unparalleled community stakeholder support.”

STUDENT DEMAND

Student interest in the proposed Pathologists’ Assistant program was determined in two ways – a web-based national survey of adults and a focused student survey at the University of Tennessee, Martin. The adult survey of 500 respondents revealed that 45 percent indicated a possible interest of a career as a pathologists’ assistant. From that group, 17 percent were more definitive of interest in this career field.

With the minimal number of undergraduate students available to survey at UTHSC, 58 students from the University of Tennessee, Martin who are majoring in Biological Sciences were surveyed. Thirteen students representing 42 percent of the sample surveyed expressed an interest in the proposed program, which is an approximate estimation of the cohort size beginning in year three.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM GRADUATES

Pathologists’ Assistants interact with pathologists, much like physician’s assistants do in surgical and medical practice, carrying out their duties under the direction of physicians. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Outlook Handbook classifies pathologists’ assistants within the physicians’ assistant category and projects job growth for the entire field to be 31 percent from 2018 to 2028. Additionally, in 2019 the American Association of Pathologists’ Assistants reported a 100 percent job placement rate for all accredited Pathologists’ Assistant programs.

Letters of support for the proposed program were included from a variety of business and industry leaders including the Jackson Pathology Group, P.C.; Regional One Health; Saint Thomas Midtown Hospital; PathGroup; West Tennessee Regional Forensic Center; and Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE PROGRAM

The UTHSC College of Health Professions has capacity to support and deliver the proposed program. The current laboratory science programs have agreed to collaborate with the proposed program and will share faculty, courses, educational resources, laboratory equipment, clinical placements, and integrated research opportunities. Facilities at UTHSC are currently sufficient for the addition of the proposed program. The program will have designated lab space in the UTHSC General Education Building and access to the human anatomy cadaver laboratory.

The proposed program will require one-time expenditures during the planning year for equipment, consulting, and accreditation costs. Recurring expenditures will be needed for four positions (Program Director, Clinical Coordinator, Education Coordinator, and Medical Director) and operating and accreditation expenses.

ASSESSMENT AND POST-APPROVAL MONITORING

An annual performance review of the proposed program will be conducted for the first five years following program approval. The review will be based on benchmarks established in the approved proposal. At the end of this period, the campus, institutional governing board, and THEC staff will perform a summative evaluation. The benchmarks include, but are not limited to, enrollment and graduation, program cost, progress toward

accreditation, and other metrics set by the institution and staff. If benchmarks are not met during the monitoring period, the Commission may recommend that the institutional governing board terminate the program. If additional time is needed and requested by the institutional governing board, the Commission may choose to extend the monitoring period.

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

Tennessee Higher Education Commission						
Appendix A: THEC Financial Projections						
University of Tennessee Health Science Center						
Master of Health Science in Pathology Assistant						
Seven-year projections are required for doctoral programs.						
Five-year projections are required for baccalaureate and Master's degree programs						
Three-year projections are required for associate degrees and undergraduate certificates.						
Projections should include cost of living increases per year.						
Planning year projections are not required but should be included when appropriate.						
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
I. Expenditures						
A. One-time Expenditures						
New/Renovated Space ¹	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Equipment	141,700	-	-	-	-	-
Library	-	-	-	-	-	-
Consultants	15,000	10,000	10,000	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	200	-	-	6,500	-	-
Sub-Total One-time	\$ 156,900	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 6,500	\$ -	\$ -
B. Recurring Expenditures						
Personnel						
Administration						
Salary	\$ 120,000	\$ 122,400	\$ 124,848	\$ 127,345	\$ 129,892	\$ 132,490
Benefits	40,560	41,371	42,199	43,043	43,903	44,782
Sub-Total Administration	\$ 160,560	\$ 163,771	\$ 167,047	\$ 170,388	\$ 173,795	\$ 177,271
Faculty						
Salary	\$ 50,000	\$ 102,000	\$ 204,040	\$ 208,121	\$ 212,283	\$ 216,529
Benefits	16,900	34,476	68,966	70,345	71,752	73,187
Sub-Total Faculty	\$ 66,900	\$ 136,476	\$ 273,006	\$ 278,466	\$ 284,035	\$ 289,716
Support Staff						
Salary (Medical Director stipend)	\$ 6,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000
Benefits	2,028	8,112	8,112	8,112	8,112	8,112
Sub-Total Support Staff	\$ 8,028	\$ 32,112	\$ 32,112	\$ 32,112	\$ 32,112	\$ 32,112
Graduate Assistants						
Salary	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Benefits	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tuition and Fees* (See Below)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub-Total Graduate Assistants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Operating						
Travel	\$ 2,700	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	\$ 9,250	\$ 9,250
Printing	1,750	500	500	500	500	500
Equipment	-	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Other	10,000	10,000	10,000	13,115	13,271	13,431
Sub-Total Operating	\$ 14,450	\$ 18,500	\$ 18,500	\$ 21,615	\$ 24,521	\$ 24,681
Total Recurring	\$ 249,938	\$ 350,859	\$ 490,664	\$ 502,580	\$ 514,463	\$ 523,780
TOTAL EXPENDITURES (A + B)	\$ 406,838	\$ 360,859	\$ 500,664	\$ 509,080	\$ 514,463	\$ 523,780

*If tuition and fees for Graduate Assistants are included, please provide the following information.						
Base Tuition and Fees Rate	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Number of Graduate Assistants	-		-	-	-	-
	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
II. Revenue						
Tuition and Fees ²	-	140,145	330,448	436,202	578,632	627,538
Institutional Reallocations ³	406,838	220,714	170,216	72,878	(64,168)	(103,758)
Federal Grants ⁴	-	-	-	-	-	-
Private Grants or Gifts ⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other ⁶	-	-	-	-	-	-
BALANCED BUDGET LINE	\$ 406,838	\$ 360,859	\$ 500,664	\$ 509,080	\$ 514,463	\$ 523,780
Notes:						
(1) Provide the funding source(s) for the new or renovated space.						
Not Applicable						
(2) In what year is tuition and fee revenue expected to be generated? Tuition and fees include maintenance fees, out-of-state tuition, and any applicable earmarked fees for the program. Explain any differential fees.						
Tuition and fee revenue will begin Year 1.						
(3) Identify the source(s) of the institutional reallocations, and grant matching requirements if applicable.						
UTHSC designated start-up funding for planning, Year 1 and Year 2. In Years 3-5, excess revenues will be reinvested in PathA program and other College of Health Professions' strategic initiatives.						
(4) Provide the source(s) of the Federal Grant including the granting department and CFDA(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) number.						
Not applicable.						
(5) Provide the name of the organization(s) or individual(s) providing grant(s) or gift(s).						
Not applicable.						
(6) Provide information regarding other sources of the funding.						
Not applicable.						