



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: I.A.

MEETING DATE: May 15, 2025

SUBJECT: New Academic Program
Roane State Community College
Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, Associate of Applied Science (AAS)

ITEM TYPE: Action

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Title and Designation | Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, Associate of Applied Science (AAS) |
| Concentrations | None |
| Accreditation | No programmatic accreditation applicable. |
| CIP Code and Description | 51.0816 (Speech-Language Pathology Assistant) A program that prepares individuals, under the supervision of speech-language pathologists, to assist in the provision of speech-language pathology services to individuals of all ages, including screenings and assessments, following treatment plans or protocols, documenting and reporting patient performance, performing checks and maintenance of equipment, and providing support in research projects. Includes instruction in speech and language development, phonetics, childhood and adult communication disorders, speech and hearing screening, and clinical procedures in speech-language pathology. |
| SOC Code and Title | 31-9099 (Healthcare Support Workers, All Other) |
| Credit Hours | 62-63 |
| Implementation Date | August 1, 2025 |
| Modality and Delivery Site | Hybrid (On-Ground) at RSCC's main campus |
| Department/College | Division of Health Sciences |
| Governing Board Approval Date | March 27, 2025 |

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE MASTER PLAN AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN

Roane State Community College (RSCC) proposes an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Speech-Language Pathology Assistant to address significant shortages of service providers in rural communities in East Tennessee. The proposed program aligns with the access and completion goals of the THEC State Master Plan for Higher Education through offering a degree in distressed and at-risk counties that make up Roane State's service area, thereby providing a higher education option for student who may otherwise have decided not to pursue higher education due to an inability to relocate. Further, the proposed program aligns with the Drive to 55 educational attainment goal by

offering an accessible degree program bolstered by success coaching and advisement to help students attain their associate's degree. Finally, the proposed program aligns with the Family Prosperity pillar of the State Master Plan Update by offering an affordable credential designed to allow students better employment opportunities, to contribute to their communities in a high-need occupation, and to earn a livable wage.

The proposed program aligns with RSCC's institutional mission and strategic plan by providing local training to equip individuals to serve their communities. The proposed program also aligns with the Tennessee Board of Regent's (TBR) Strategic Plan's commitment to improving the condition of individuals, families, and communities across the state through economic vitality and mobility through programming designed to support local schools and to provide advancement opportunities for students completing the program.

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

The proposed Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, AAS will be the first associate-level program in the state of Tennessee.

WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), Tennessee expects a 31% increase in demand for speech-language pathologists from 2018-2028, an expansion in need that will be especially pronounced in rural areas that do not have the service providers in educational and healthcare settings to match demand. The proposed program will provide accessible education to rural Tennesseans and produce graduates eligible to be licensed by the Tennessee Board of Communication Disorders and Sciences as Speech-Language Pathology Assistants and to sit for the Certified Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (C-SLPA) exam developed by ASHA.

A 2022 survey conducted by the Tennessee Department of Education found that 32 school districts reported vacancies exceeding six months in speech-language pathology, and that 64% of Tennessee special education directors were concerned about having capacity over the next five years to meet projected speech-language needs of students. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects a 6% national growth in speech-language pathology assistants by 2033, or roughly 15,300 annual openings. O-NET Online also reflects a 19% increase in Tennessee by 2030, with 280 annual openings. Speech-language pathology assistants have competitive starting salaries both nationally and locally, with an average hourly wage of \$30.77 nationally and \$22—\$30 per hour in RSCC's service area, equivalent to a full-time salary ranging from \$45,760—\$62,400.

CURRICULUM

The proposed program will consist of 63 credit hours of coursework offered primarily on-ground, with some courses being offered online. The coursework will include 35 credit hours of general education courses and 28 credit hours constituting the program core. Students will be able to complete as many as 10 classes via dual enrollment. As part of the program, all students will complete at least 100 hours of hands-on clinical training, which is required for licensure. Eleven new courses were developed for the proposed program, and all have received the necessary campus approvals.

TBR and RSCC intend to seek articulation and transfer agreements with public institutions in the state offering undergraduate degrees in Speech-Language Pathology, including Austin Peay State University, East Tennessee State University, Middle Tennessee State University, Tennessee State University, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

PROJECTED ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION

| | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrollment | 12 | 24 | 24 |
| Graduates | -- | 10 | 10 |

STUDENT INTEREST AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

RSCC anticipates student interest in the proposed program since it will be the first program of its kind in the state, and 30 of the 50 states in the country offer programming in speech-language pathology assistant. Initial outreach for the proposed program, including a social media campaign for the new Introduction to Communication Disorders course, has resulted in significant inquiries from prospective students (25+ contacts in Scott County alone). Additional outreach to surrounding counties, school districts, and prospective students is planned following necessary approvals. Enrollment in RSCC's Occupational Therapist Assistant, a similar program, has met similar enrollment projections, and comparisons with other speech-language pathologist assistant programs in the southeast demonstrate that enrollment projections are reasonable.

Letters of support were provided by the Tennessee Department of Education, Anderson County Schools, Cumberland County Schools, Roane County Schools, and Grace Rehabilitation Center speak to the critical need for speech-language providers and the difficulties with hiring and retaining qualified providers in rural and underserved areas.

PROGRAM COSTS AND REVENUES

The proposed one-time and recurring expenditures for the Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, AAS program are listed in the Financial Projections Table below. Start-up costs are relatively low, and the program anticipates being revenue positive by Year 2.

Table 1: Estimated Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

| <i>Estimated Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program</i> | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| One-Time Expenditures | | | | | | |
| Category | Planning | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Faculty & Instructional Staff | | | | | | |
| Non-Instructional Staff | | | | | | |
| Graduate Assistants | | | | | | |
| Accreditation | | | | | | |
| Consultants | | | | | | |
| Equipment | \$6,000 | | | | | |
| Information Tech | \$2,500 | | | | | |
| Library | | | | | | |
| Marketing | | | | | | |
| Facilities | | | | | | |
| Travel | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Other | | | | | | |
| <i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i> | \$8,500 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Recurring Expenditures | | | | | | |
| Category | Planning | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Faculty & Instructional Staff | \$94,580 | \$96,472 | \$98,401 | \$100,369 | \$102,376 | \$104,424 |
| Non-Instructional Staff | | | | | | |
| Graduate Assistants | | | | | | |
| Accreditation | | | | | | |
| Consultants | | | | | | |
| Equipment | | \$4,000 | \$4,000 | \$4,000 | \$4,000 | \$4,000 |
| Information Tech | | | | | | |
| Library | | | | | | |
| Marketing | | | | | | |
| Facilities | | | | | | |
| Travel | | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 |
| Other: | | | | | | |
| <i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i> | \$94,580 | \$101,972 | \$103,901 | \$105,869 | \$107,876 | \$109,924 |
| Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring) | \$103,080 | \$101,972 | \$103,901 | \$105,869 | \$107,876 | \$109,924 |
| Projected Revenues | | | | | | |
| Category | Planning | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Tuition | | \$63,134 | \$125,773 | \$128,289 | \$130,854 | \$133,472 |
| Grants/Gifts | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | |
| Total Revenues | \$0 | \$63,134 | \$125,773 | \$128,289 | \$130,854 | \$133,472 |