



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: I.E.

MEETING DATE: May 15, 2025

SUBJECT: New Academic Program
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, Master of Science (MS)

ITEM TYPE: Action

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Title and Designation	Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, Master of Science (MS)
Concentrations / Certifications	NA
CIP Code and Description	52.0901 (Hospitality Administration/Management, General) A program that prepares individuals to serve as general managers and directors of hospitality operations on a system-wide basis, including both travel arrangements and promotion and the provision of traveler facilities. Includes instruction in principles of operations in the travel and tourism, hotel and lodging facilities, food services, and recreation facilities industries; hospitality marketing strategies; hospitality planning; management and coordination of franchise and unit operations; business management; accounting and financial management; hospitality transportation and logistics; and hospitality industry policies and regulations.
SOC Code and Title	Proposed SOC Codes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11-9081 (Lodging Managers)• 11-9051 (Food Service Managers)• 13-1121 (Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners)• 11-2021 (Marketing Managers)• 11-2022 (Sales Managers)
Credit Hours	30
Implementation Date	August 1, 2025
Modality and Delivery Site	Fully Online
Department/College	Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management; College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences
Governing Board Approval Date	February 27-28, 2025

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE MASTER PLAN AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) proposes an online, asynchronous Master of Science (MS) degree in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (RHTM) to complement existing undergraduate and doctoral offerings in the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management at UTK. The proposed program would be the first asynchronous, online master's program in Tennessee, and the only program at the master level with a focus on retail. Undergraduate students, alumni, and industry partners have all expressed interest in UTK offering the proposed program which will seek to provide students with salary advancement, promotion potential, and greater career opportunities in related fields.

The proposed program aligns with the State Master Plan for Higher Education by "addressing the state's economic development, workforce development, and research needs." According to the 2022-2023 Tennessee Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report, leisure, retail, and hospitality jobs are anticipated to be the third- and fourth-largest industries in the state—preceded only by healthcare and manufacturing, which translates to 723,636 total jobs and 217,656 new jobs by 2030. Providing high-quality educational programming in retail, hospitality, and tourism management will benefit industry by training well-equipped leaders and entrepreneurs to take on growth and changes in the sector. The proposed program also aligns with the Student Success and Family Prosperity goals of the Master Plan Update by providing flexible, online curriculum for working and returning students interested in advancing their careers and quality of life. The proposed program will be more affordable than comparable online programs for Tennessee students, as almost all current online asynchronous offerings are out-of-state. Further, the program aligns with the goal of preparing the future workforce by offering a program with growing need in the state and enhancing student learning through work-based and experiential learning.

The proposed program also aligns with all five goals articulated in UTK's Strategic Vision and Mission. Through curriculum designed to assist with career advancement and equip graduates with skills to excel in the ever-changing entrepreneurial landscape, the proposed program provides "high-quality educational opportunities for people at every stage of life" and embraces "collaboration, agility, and innovation." Further, the proposed program will allow students to complete research relevant to their current and desired careers in concert with hands-on experience, thereby "embodying the modern R1" and "conducting research that improves lives."

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

Currently, two similar programs are offered in Tennessee at Middle Tennessee State University (Leisure, Sport, and Tourism Management, MS) and at the University of Memphis (Sport and Hospitality Management, MS). However, the proposed program differs from these programs due to its online, asynchronous delivery mode and its focus on retail, as opposed to the existing programs' focus on sport management.

WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

According to research conducted by Tourism Economics on behalf of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, tourism generated a record \$28.9 billion in domestic spending in 2022, and Tennessee has been the fastest-growing state in travel spending since 2018, rising from 14th to 11th in the nation. According to the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development's report of Tennessee

visitor profiles, 33% of visitors chose shopping as part of their activities, and offering retail training alongside hospitality and tourism will continue to be valuable.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the leisure and hospitality industry will generate 113,786 more positions by 2030 statewide, with the Accommodation and Food Services sector as well as the Art, Entertainment, and Recreation sector making up the bulk of those opportunities. The retail sector is also expected to have 317,029 jobs statewide by 2030, and managerial roles associated with retail are projected to grow in Tennessee and in neighboring states. Job outlooks for general and operations managers, market research analysts, buyers and purchasing agents, food service managers, lodging managers, and entertainment and recreation managers all show double-digit growth from 2022-2032. Regional demand in East Tennessee is also expected to grow significantly between 2020 to 2030 by roughly 3.64% translating to 92,732 jobs. While not all of those jobs will require a master's degree, higher-level managerial positions will evolve from the expansion of the industry and students with master's-level training will have an advantage when pursuing management and heavily analytical roles.

CURRICULUM

The proposed Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management will require 30 credit hours and will include a thesis option. Students not pursuing a thesis option will complete 10 courses total, including four core courses, three to four elective courses, an industry experience, and a research project. Thesis students will be required to complete four core courses, four elective courses, and six credit hours of thesis work. Students without a background in retail, hospitality, or tourism management will be required to take a three-credit pre-requisite course, resulting in 33 total credit hours for the program. All students will complete at least six credits of applied learning in retail, hospitality, and tourism management through an industry experience, research project, or an international study abroad tour. Twelve new courses are needed to support the proposed program. All have been developed and gone through the necessary campus approvals.

PROJECTED ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION

The enrollment and graduation figures below represent full-time and part-time enrollment.

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Enrollment	30	57	65	70	76
Graduates	0	24	27	31	32

STUDENT INTEREST AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Two surveys were administered in 2024 to evaluate student interest, one of current undergraduate students and the other with retail, hospitality, and tourism professionals. The survey of undergraduate students resulted in 130 responses. Among the current students, 52.3% (n=45) expressed interest in the proposed master's degree, and 58.1% (n=76) were interested in applying for the accelerated option. The survey of working professionals garnered 1,022 responses. Sixty-seven percent of respondents had an undergraduate degree in retail, hospitality, tourism, and event management, while another 15.3% had other business majors. Of this core group, interest in the proposed program was overwhelmingly positive, with 51.4% (n=302) indicating strong interest in applying. Ninety percent (n=206) of working professionals without a bachelor's degree expressed interest in applying to the proposed program, indicating a potential pool of future students for both

the undergraduate and graduate degrees. Free response data also provided useful information to the program designers, including suggestions for improving online learning, specific topics of interest to potential students, and desires for project-based learning.

The advisory board for the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management includes retail, hospitality, and tourism businesses, such as Belk, Pilot Flying J, Tractor Supply Company, Cracker Barrel Country Store, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), McKibbon Hotel Management, and Blackberry Farm. The department also maintains close working relationships with professional organizations such as Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association, Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association, Greater Nashville Hospitality Association, Sevier County Hospitality and Tourism Association, and Visit Chattanooga Tourism Authority. Furthermore, the department’s collaboration with the Southern Hospitality Internship Program (SHIP) has enabled students to forge meaningful connections with businesses in Sevier County. Six letters of support were received from Avery Dennison, Connor Concepts, Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association, McKibbon Hospitality, Southern Hospitality Internship Program (SHIP), and VolShop.

EXTERNAL JUDGMENT

A virtual external review of the proposed program was conducted on November 18, 2024, by Dr. Mary Dawson, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership at the University of Houston. The site visit included meetings with campus administrators, support staff, and faculty from UTK, as well as current UTK students and industry partners. Given the “thoroughness of the planning, the innovative curriculum, and the current individuals leading the program,” Dr. Dawson “highly recommend[ed] approval.” She added, “The program has the potential for exponential growth and to swiftly become a benchmark within the hospitality industry higher education online graduate programs,” and also noted the program’s “overwhelming support of the [institutional] administration and the hospitality/tourism industry.”

PROGRAM COSTS AND REVENUES

The proposed one-time and recurring expenditures as well as revenues for the Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism program are listed in Table 1. The proposed program expects relatively low start-up costs, with most recurring expenditures in the faculty and instructional staff category to support the growth of the program. The program anticipates being revenue-positive in Year 1.

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	\$45,000					
Non-Instructional Staff						
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation						

Consultants	\$1,000					
Equipment						
Information Tech						
Library						
Marketing						
Facilities						
Travel						
Other						
<i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i>	<i>\$46,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>
Recurring Expenditures						
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$11,653	\$16,883	\$17,671	\$17,931	\$120,619	\$124,118
Non-Instructional Staff	\$6,250	\$35,377	\$36,439	\$37,532	\$38,658	\$39,818
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation						
Consultants						
Equipment						
Information Tech						
Library						
Marketing	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Facilities						
Travel	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$4,000	\$4,000
Other						
<i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i>	<i>\$28,903</i>	<i>\$63,260</i>	<i>\$65,610</i>	<i>\$66,963</i>	<i>\$171,277</i>	<i>\$175,936</i>
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$74,903	\$63,260	\$65,610	\$66,963	\$171,277	\$175,936
Projected Revenues						
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition		\$229,500	\$367,200	\$436,050	\$466,650	\$515,100
Grants	\$45,000*					
Other						

Total Revenues	\$45,000	\$229,500	\$367,200	\$436,050	\$466,650	\$515,100
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