

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA:  
MASTER OF ATHLETIC TRAINING PROGRAM**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to establish a new Master of Athletic Training Program in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Services in the College of Education.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed program will provide an opportunity for graduates to practice as certified athletic trainers. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of proposed program.** Athletic Trainers (ATs) are health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide preventative services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. Students who want to become certified athletic trainers must earn a degree from an accredited athletic training curriculum. Accredited programs include formal instruction in areas such as injury/illness prevention, first aid and emergency care, assessment of injury/illness, human anatomy and physiology, therapeutic modalities, and nutrition. Classroom learning is enhanced through clinical education experiences.

The proposed program is a two-year Professional Master’s degree in Athletic Training that will seek accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). The program will offer the entry-level skills required under CAATE accreditation standards within a graduate level curriculum. The overall academic objective is to prepare students for the Board of Certification (BOC) exam. Student will be taught essential athletic training knowledge and skills to earn certification as an athletic trainer. The educational content will be based on the Athletic Training Education Competencies provided by the National Athletic Trainers Association.

The proposed program can be completed in two years. Coursework will focus on entry-level content necessary to practice and to complete the BOC exam, as well as higher level, graduate coursework that delves into the research, evidence, and critical reasoning that drives the field of athletic training. Throughout the two-year program, students will gain critical experience by participating in several clinical experiences, on- and off-campus.

- ◇ **Academic objectives.**
  - ⇒ Offer the mandated entry-level athletic training curriculum at the graduate level.
  - ⇒ Offer graduate level content grounded in the theories of evidence-based practice.
  - ⇒ Produce highly skilled graduated trained in the most current practice.
  - ⇒ Produce highly skilled graduates trained in athletic training clinical research.

- ◇ Need for proposed program. There is no professional master's program in Iowa. Interested students must leave the state to pursue this degree. Implementation of the proposed program will result in having UNI be the first in the state and the demand would likely be strong.
  - ⇒ Students who decide to pursue athletic training as an undergraduate or after they have completed an undergraduate degree must complete a professional program for entry into the field. Juniors and seniors must either stay for an additional three years to complete the professional bachelor's program or pursue a professional master's program elsewhere.
  - ⇒ Numerous student-athletes are interested in athletic training but do not want to stay three additional years to complete an undergraduate program after their athletic careers.
  - ⇒ The proposed program would provide an additional opportunity for transfer students who enter UNI with only a year or two of coursework to earn an undergraduate degree outside of athletic training would be able to enter the professional master's program.
  
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The proposed program will align with the goals in the College of Education's strategic plan.
  - ⇒ The university will lead the state by developing the first professional master's program in Iowa.
  - ⇒ The university will lead or stay on par with the national trend to transition to a professional master's degree. There are only 31 professional master's programs, compared to 335 professional bachelor's programs in the United States.
  - ⇒ Becoming a notable program in the United States aligns with the mission of the university which is to be a distinguished arts and sciences university.
  
- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at SUI. The proposed program is similar to the undergraduate athletic training program because both programs develop entry-level athletic training skills. Instruction and evaluation of the same NATA Athletic Training Education Competencies must be integrated into both academic programs. However, the key difference between the two programs is that the Professional Masters' students will have already completed a bachelor's degree, and will also complete considerable coursework at the graduate level. Students will be exposed to evidence-based research and design, translating research into practice, and critically analyzing evidence that does and does not support athletic training practices.

A portion of the coursework in the Professional Master's program will coordinate with the Athletic Training Graduate academic core. UNI currently offers a post-professional Athletic Training Program (Master of Science in Athletic Training) for those students who pursue graduate work in Athletic Training following completion of their professional bachelor's degree. These students have graduated from a CAATE accredited professional bachelors program and are eligible to complete the Board of Certification (BOC) examination. Therefore, students pursuing a Master of Science in Athletic Training are typically Certified and Licensed Athletic Trainers wishing to advance their academic career as well as gain valuable experience as a graduate assistant Athletic Trainer. Much of the coursework required for the post-professional Master of Science in Athletic Training students will also be required of the Professional Master of Athletic Training students.

Thus, the proposed program represents a “hybrid” of the current undergraduate and graduate programs already offered at UNI. The program will integrate courses already offered at the university through the College of Education, School of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Services. Utilizing the personnel, facilities, and equipment already available will require the addition of a few new courses.

Other undergraduate programs at the University will be enhanced by attracting students who wish to pursue the professional master’s program after students have completed their bachelors program. Specifically, the program in Movement and Exercise Science could benefit directly from this proposed program. Additionally, this will be an appealing option for transfer students who have already completed two years of coursework towards a bachelor’s degree.

- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. There is no professional master’s program in Athletic Training available in Iowa.
- ◇ Unique features.
  - ⇒ Curriculum
    - Professional (entry-level) content is already offered through the professional Bachelor of Athletic Training program. This entry-level content is the same for all professional programs (bachelor’s and master’s).
    - Graduate level (master’s) content is currently offered in the post-professional Master of Science in Athletic Training program.
    - A key distinction between graduate and undergraduate programs is the requirement for active participation in research activities or internships to practice professional skills, or both.<sup>1</sup>
  - ⇒ Faculty and staff
    - Four tenure-track athletic training faculty.
    - Seven athletic training P & S staff members.
    - One administrative assistant.
  - ⇒ Facilities and resources
    - The Human Performance Center, opened in 2008, houses state-of-the-art, didactic and clinical facilities for students. The first floor is dedicated to athletic training, including:
      - Faculty and staff offices
      - A classroom designed specifically for athletic training curriculum
      - An athletic training research laboratory
      - An athletic training room to provide clinical experiences
      - A hydrotherapy room containing an underwater treadmill
    - Diverse and numerous clinical experience sites have been established throughout the Cedar Valley and neighboring communities to accommodate students.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkerson G.B., Colston M.A., Bogdanowicz B.T. Distinctions between athletic training education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Athletic Training Education Journal 2006; 1(2):38-4).

- Other programs in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Services, specifically Movement and Exercise Science, offer content that aligns with the proposed program.
- ◆ Duplication. This program is not offered elsewhere in Iowa.
- ◆ Resources. The department does not anticipate an immediate need for new resources. The program will integrate courses offered through the department and will use the available personnel, facilities, and equipment which will make the need for additional courses and resources minimal. Enrollment and student demand will dictate the need for additional faculty resources.
  - ⇒ The department is engaged in a search for a fifth tenure-track faculty member to implement the proposed program and to maintain the undergraduate program and the post-professional program.
  - ⇒ There will be a need to increase the “Summer Teaching” budget to enable the professional master’s students to complete the necessary coursework and clinical experiences through summer coursework. This will include six credit hours of coursework during the first summer and nine credit hours of coursework during the second summer.
  - ⇒ There will be a need for equipment upgrades and maintenance during the first years of the program.
  - ⇒ There will be accreditation fees prior to accreditation, for the initial accreditation, and for continued accreditation.
- ◆ Student demand. The current demand for the undergraduate athletic training program is strong. The Fall 2017 cohort includes 40 students who have been admitted into the program. The department believes that students who want to pursue the professional master’s program must do so out of state. The profession is moving toward a professional master’s degree requirement for certification; when this occurs, the demand for the program is expected to rise significantly.
- ◆ Workforce need/demand. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employment for athletic trainers is expected to “grow faster than average for all occupations.” Currently, the U.S. Department of Labor projects a 21% growth for athletic trainers between 2012 and 2022.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ Consultation with representatives of other programs. None occurred because there is no similar program available in Iowa.
- ◆ Cost. The total costs for the proposed program are expected to be \$21,750 in Year One, increasing to \$69,250 by Year Seven. The new costs are expected to be \$21,750 in Year One, \$27,750 in Year Two, \$11,250 in Year Three, and \$5,000 for Years Four through Seven. The new costs will support the summer teaching budget, equipment upgrades and maintenance, and accreditation fees. Department and College reallocation will support the new costs.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/athletic-trainers-and-exercise-physiologists.htm#tab-6>.

The Athletic Training Division is one of four divisions in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Services (HPELS). The School is considered to be one department, thus one budget for all four divisions. Individual division budgets are not allocated. For the most part, budget allocations within the School of HPELS are provided to each division based on rationale, requests, and accreditation necessity. Course instruction budget allocations are funded through the School of HPELS, College of Education, and, the Provost's Office.

- ◇ Projected enrollment. The enrollment is expected to be eight graduate majors in Year One, increasing to 30 by Year Seven. Increases in enrollment will likely be affected if the entry-level master's becomes the only option for entry into the profession.
- ◇ Anticipated sources of students. The department anticipates that the following sources of students will contribute to enrollment in the proposed program: UNI students completing a bachelor's degree; students from other institutions (in Iowa or elsewhere) completing a bachelor's degree; and non-traditional students with a bachelor's degree interested in a career change.
- ◇ Articulation agreement. Articulation agreements will be pursued with other institutions in the state following accreditation of the program.
- ◇ Off-campus delivery. Off-campus delivery is not planned initially.
- ◇ Opportunities for internships. Students must complete a clinical experience requirement each semester in the program. The purpose of each clinical experience is to provide the students the opportunity to informally and kinesthetically apply what they have learned in the classroom. During the clinical experience, the only skill competencies that students may practice are those that they have successfully completed with 95% or greater proficiency. All students will be provided the opportunity to have a clinical experience with a variety of populations, including, "individual and team sports; sports requiring protective equipment; patients of different sexes; non-sport patient populations; a variety of conditions other than orthopedics" (CAATE Standards for Professional Programs, 2012). Each student must complete each clinical experience requirement in order to successfully complete the Clinical Integration courses. The grade earned in each Clinical Integration course will be partially based upon the grade received in clinical experiences as determined by the clinical experience preceptor.

The supplementary clinical experience is designed to provide the student with hands on experience and observation in various aspects of sports medicine. The supplementary clinical experience should include some or all of the following content: 1) Injury/Illness Prevention and Wellness Protection, 2) Clinical Evaluation and Diagnosis, 3) Immediate and Emergency Care, 4) Treatment and Rehabilitation, and 5) Organizational and Professional Health and Well-being.

- ◇ Marketing plan. The marketing plan will include brochures and websites; Office of Admissions visits to regional colleges/universities; information to students majoring in programs in the School of HPELS or Biology at UNI and other colleges/universities in the region; listing on CAATE website among accredited programs (after obtaining accreditation); and e-mails to other CAATE accredited program administrators throughout the country (after obtaining accreditation).

- ◇ Evaluation plan. The comprehensive assessment plan will evaluate all aspects of the athletic training program. Specifically, the plan will assess course instructor effectiveness, preceptor effectiveness, graduating students' perceptions of program effectiveness, student perceptions of program effectiveness one year post graduation, general program outcomes, and student outcomes. The assessment results will be shared with the Division of Athletic Training faculty and staff, athletic training students, Director of the School of HPELS, Dean of the College of Education, Provost, and the President of the University of Northern Iowa via electronic communication at the conclusion of every academic year by the AT Program Director. Progress reports will be provided as necessary. Portions of the data will be shared with the public via our UNI Athletic Training website, as deemed appropriate and mandated by the CAATE Standards. Stakeholders of the UNI Athletic Training Program will have the opportunity to review the results of the comprehensive assessment as necessary and provide suggestions for improvement. Assessment measures that are below benchmark will be evaluated for improvement needs and plans for improvement will be devised.
  
- ◇ Letter of support. A letter of support from the University of Iowa is included in Attachment A.
  
- ◇ Date of implementation. Creation of the proposed program will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog. The anticipated implementation date is Fall 2016.



**COLLEGE OF  
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August 22, 2013

Dr. Dwight C. Watson  
Dean, College of Education  
University of Northern Iowa

Dear Dean Watson:

The Department of Health and Human Physiology at The University of Iowa has reviewed a letter outlining a proposal for a new academic program in athletic training submitted by the University of Northern Iowa. Thank you for requesting our input.

In light of our undergraduate program in athletic training and those of other colleges in the State of Iowa, we see a value in offering a master's degree program to allow students to pursue this field of study when those students' aspirations have not been met at the undergraduate level. This program will also appeal to those who discover this health care profession later in their collegiate career or after graduation. No such curricular option currently exists within the state.

Professional education discussions in the field focus more each day on the education required for entry into the practice of athletic training. Although it is unclear whether accreditation requirements will increase to the level of the master's degree, the discussion has begun and our collaborating health care fields have helped to lead the way.

Based on our review of the letter and indications of the outlined proposal for a professional master's degree at the University of Northern Iowa, we have no objections to the development of the proposed new program.

Again, thank you for contacting us, and we wish you well with this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Chaden Djalali  
Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
UI Alumni Association Dean's Chair in the Liberal Arts & Sciences

c: Helena Dettmer  
Kevin Kregel  
Danny Foster