Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM IN BACHELOR OF APPLIED PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN APPLIED HEALTH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Committee Action Requested: Recommend to the Board approval of the request for a new program in Bachelor of Applied Professional Studies in Applied Health Studies in the University College at the University of Iowa.

The Council of Provosts and Board office staff reviewed the proposal and recommend approval.

Description of Proposed Program: The Applied Health Studies program of study will be the first major of the new Bachelor of Applied Professional Studies (BAPS) degree type at the University of Iowa and will be housed in University College. The knowledge and skills gained from this program will equip students with a foundation to prepare them for careers across healthcare in clinical and clinical adjacent roles. This program will have two pathways: the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) certificate and healthcare services. The program will be an online reduced-credit bachelor's degree, with a focus on career and leadership knowledge and skills for students interested in working in the healthcare industry. Students completing the MRI certificate pathway will have an in-person practicum in Iowa City. All other coursework will be online.

This program intends to reach a new market of students: working adults with credential gaps, healthcare professionals seeking upward mobility, individuals with prior college credits with no complete credential, and those with completed associate degrees and/or certificates.

Academic Objectives: Graduates of the applied health studies program will be able to do the following in health-related environments:

- Interpret and accurately apply medical and technical terminology.
- Analyze social, cultural, economic and environmental determinants of health and their influences on health outcomes.
- Apply evidence-informed approaches in both clinical and non-clinical settings.
- Communicate effectively using written, oral and digital modalities for varied audiences and purposes.
- Demonstrate professional and career readiness competencies, including teamwork, ethical practice, customer service and leadership awareness.
- Employ critical thinking to support quality improvement and informed decision-making.

Need for Program: From a workforce perspective, medical and health services managers are projected to have approximately 62,100 annual openings nationally. Additionally, healthcare management occupations are expected to grow 23%. There were also 445 regional job openings for MRI technologists in 2024, and the occupation of MRI technologists is also growing more than 20 times the national average.

The proposed applied health studies program will provide a valuable pathway for healthcare and health-related professionals with an associate degree or prior college credits to complete a bachelor's degree. The University of Iowa currently offers a Bachelor of Arts in Health Studies. However, the BA in Health Studies program is 120 s.h. and has different learning objectives than the proposed reduced credit degree in applied health studies. Additionally, the proposed applied health studies program will be housed within University College, which has an

established infrastructure for serving non-traditional and working adult students. The online course delivery is designed explicitly for working adults, military-affiliated students, and students returning to complete a degree with prior college credit who need flexibility.

Additionally, the MRI certificate is not currently offered as part of an existing degree program. While the BS in Radiation Sciences will begin offering an MRI track in fall 2027, it will have a limited number of available seats in the program each year and will require more courses and clinical internship hours than the MRI certificate. Additionally, the completion of the MRI certificate as a standalone program does not lead to a bachelor's degree. Therefore, integrating the MRI certificate into the proposed applied health studies program provides students who may have some prior college credit an opportunity to pursue the MRI field in a program structure that is catered towards working professionals, while also obtaining a bachelor's degree.

Resources Needed for Program: The proposed applied health studies program will initially rely on existing courses offered by University College, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Carver College of Medicine as well as current academic advising resources in University College. As such, it will not require the development of new courses or the hiring of additional instructors or staff. As enrollment grows, additional instructors may be needed to offer additional course sections. Based on current advising loads, enrollment would need to reach approximately 100 students before an additional academic advisor would be warranted.

Funding Sources: No new resources will be needed to launch the program. As the program grows, any financial resources needed to support the proposed program will be reallocated from the college, and any new tuition revenue generated from this proposed program will also be used to cover costs. Based on current financial analysis, it is anticipated the program will break even for University College in year one, generating $21,565 in net revenue. By year five of the program, net revenue is expected to be $140,130 in University College.

Workforce Demand: The proposed applied health studies program will address some of the workforce need in healthcare in the state of Iowa and nationally. The data supports the workforce demand for both MRI technologists and healthcare services positions:

MRI technologists:

- Job opening demand vs. supply: 445 regional job openings in 2024 against 74 total regional completions across all program types, a 6:1 demand-to-supply ratio.
- National outlook: The Bureau of Labor Statistics designates MRI Technologists as Bright Outlook, growing more than 20 times the national average.

Healthcare services positions:

- Job opening demand: Medical and health services managers are projected to have approximately 62,100 openings per year nationally, reflecting strong demand for professionals who can oversee healthcare operations, programs and services.
- National outlook: Healthcare management occupations are projected to grow 23%, far exceeding the 3% average growth rate for all occupations. Demand is also expected to remain strong in patient navigation, community health and health information roles.

Sources: Lightcast Q2 2026 Data Set (Occupation Overview and Program Overview); Bureau of Labor Statistics 2025 Wage Data via ONET Online

Student Demand: The primary student pipeline is the Some College, No Credential (SCNC) population, adults who have accumulated college credit but have not completed a credential.

The 6-state SCNC population under age 65 reached approximately 4.15 million in 2025, a 4.1% increase from 2023, representing ~87,100 projected re-enrollers annually (source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center). Iowa's SCNC population of ~380,000 alone yields an estimated 7,220 potential re-enrollers. With strong workforce demand in healthcare, a portion of these students is likely to find this reduced credit pathway appealing.

Additionally, only 37.3% of employed MRI Technologists nationally hold a bachelor's degree, while 10.2% hold some college with no degree and 32.2% hold an associate's degree (Lightcast Q2 2026). That means roughly 42% of the existing MRI Tech workforce nationally is at or below the associate's level, a substantial pool of working professionals who could pursue degree completion, particularly through an online-accessible, reduced-credit pathway.

Other anticipated student sources include military-affiliated students with transfer credit and associate degree holders from radiologic technology or allied health programs seeking upward mobility.

Enrollment Projections:

	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**
Majors	16	35	57	82	98
Non-majors	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Relationship to Existing Programs at Other Universities: Currently, there are no other reduced credit bachelor's programs in the state of Iowa with a health focus.

Other programs offered in the state with the same classification of instructional program code include:

- University of Northern Iowa's BA/BS in Health Sciences
- Drake University's BS in Health Sciences
- Graceland University's BS in Allied Healthcare
- Loras College's BS in Health Sciences
- Luther College's BA in Global Health
- St Luke's College's Bachelor of Health Science

Accreditation: The University of Iowa will seek approval from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) through its substantive change process for reduced-credit bachelor's degree programs after the Iowa Board of Regents approval process is concluded.

Date of Implementation: August 2027