



# UNC CHARLOTTE

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January 13, 2017

Dr. Kimberly van Noort  
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Dear Kim:

Enclosed is UNC Charlotte's Request to Plan a Master of Science in Athletic Training (MSAT). The proposed program will expand on our successful existing B.S. in athletic training and replace it with a new graduate program, as required by the National Athletic Trainers Association and the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education. Our joint preamble is also submitted in conjunction with the other University of North Carolina campuses also proposing programs: Appalachian State University, UNC Pembroke, UNC Wilmington, and Western Carolina University.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Provost Lorden or I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.

Cordially,

Philip L. Dubois  
Chancellor

cc: Joan F. Lorden, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Nan Fey-Yensan, Dean, College of Health and Human Services  
Courtney Thornton, Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate  
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**The Master of Science in Athletic Training Degree: Creating Athletic Training  
Professional Master's Programs in North Carolina  
PREAMBLE**

January 23, 2017

Submitted to:

University of North Carolina - General Administration

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## **I. Executive Summary**

- National standards are changing for the entry-level credential for Athletic Trainers from a Bachelor's to a Master's level.
- In North Carolina and 48 other states, Athletic Trainers must be nationally credentialed and licensed/regulated by their respective state to practice.
- To continue to meet state need, five University of North Carolina (UNC) institutions are each proposing an Athletic Training Professional Master's Program, bringing the total number of UNC Programs to seven.
- Each UNC Program serves a distinct student population and meets distinct student and societal needs across North Carolina.

## **II. Introduction**

Athletic Trainers have a vital role in the delivery of healthcare for sport and life as “multi-skilled healthcare professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide [preventive] services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions.”<sup>1</sup> Programs offering the entry-level degree required to become certified and practice as an Athletic Trainer are known as Athletic Training Professional Programs, and they can currently be at the Bachelor's or Master's level. Historically, most programs have offered a Bachelor's degree. Certified Athletic Trainers wanting advanced knowledge and skills in athletic training can enter a graduate school program for a Master's degree; these degree programs are known as Athletic Training Post-Professional Programs.

There is a strong national trend towards requiring graduate-level education as the entry point for the practicing clinician in healthcare professions, especially peer healthcare professions to athletic training. Occupational therapy, physician assistant (as of the year 2020), and speech and language pathology programs all require a Master's degree. Over the past ten years institutions across the United States have begun offering Athletic Training Professional Programs at the Master's level. Thus, it was not surprising when, in 2015, the Athletic Training Strategic Alliance decided to require accredited Athletic Training Professional Programs to grant a Master's degree as the entry-level degree in the field of athletic training.<sup>2</sup> Following that decision, the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) revised the standards for accreditation, mandating this change. The degree change does not reflect so-called “degree creep.” Universities are developing new Master's degree programs to comply with expanding competencies, advanced content and immersive clinical education requirements from the CAATE. While it is uncertain at this time what will be the result for existing Athletic Training Post-Professional Programs, what is certain is that institutions currently operating Athletic Training Professional Bachelor's Programs must begin the process of phasing out these Programs, and determine whether to offer Athletic Training Professional Master's Programs.

Presently, five universities within the University of North Carolina (UNC) system (Appalachian State University, UNC Charlotte, UNC Pembroke, UNC Wilmington, and Western Carolina University) have decided to propose an Athletic Training Professional Master's Program. Once approved by the UNC system, each university will begin the process of notifying the CAATE of

the intent to change degree status. The first Athletic Training Professional Master's Program cohort from these institutions could be enrolled as early as summer 2019. *Note: Two other UNC institutions, East Carolina University and UNC-Greensboro, already have Board of Governors authorization to offer an Athletic Training Professional Master's Program.*

### **III. The Advantages of Graduate-Level Education for Athletic Trainers**

Professional education at the graduate level facilitates many aspects of enhancement and advancement for the athletic training environment:<sup>3</sup>

*Professional education should not compete with general education, the liberal arts, and an increasingly necessary strong foundation in health-related sciences.* There is tremendous value in general education and liberal arts studies that help to develop a well-rounded, critical thinker. A focused professional graduate education in athletic training allows students to maximize the benefits of both undergraduate and professional education. At the undergraduate level, students' time and effort are focused on pre-professional coursework, and they can better participate in extra-curricular activities such as athletics, on- or off-campus employment, or experiences such as undergraduate research or study abroad. At the graduate level, more mature, focused students can concentrate on professional coursework, have more robust and immersed clinical experiences, and be more prepared for autonomous clinical practice. This professional focus is evidenced by recent Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC) examination data showing higher pass rates for students in Athletic Training Professional Master's Programs.<sup>4</sup>

*Graduate-level education will facilitate better alignment with other healthcare profession programs within their institutions.* Alignment with similar professions at similar academic levels can facilitate interprofessional education and collaboration of resources, personnel, and learning experiences.

*Professional education at the graduate level enhances retention of students who are committed to the pursuit of a career in athletic training.* A survey<sup>3</sup> of 2010 – 2012 graduates showed 98% of those with a Master's degree intended to practice as an Athletic Trainer, compared to 74.2% of those with a Bachelor's degree. The Master's degree provides a more deliberate and intentional decision to pursue athletic training as a "destination profession." This move also attracts a better-prepared student who can assimilate the increasingly complex concepts that are foundational for athletic training practice.

*Salary data suggests there are positive differences in average annual income between Athletic Trainers with Master's and Bachelor's degrees.* However, there is no direct empirical evidence a graduate degree will or will not result in enhanced employment opportunities or salaries for Athletic Trainers. The National Athletic Trainers' Association conducts a salary survey every two years. Average salaries by degree in the 2016 survey were \$42,651 (Bachelor's), \$52,906 (Master's), and \$80,961 (Doctorate). Closer alignment of the degree with peer professions with which athletic training competes in the marketplace may help employment opportunities and wages.

#### IV. Curriculum

The following highlights the essential elements present in all Athletic Training Professional Programs:<sup>5</sup>

- A competency-based approach, using a medical-based education model
- Didactic and clinical education components provide instruction in eight content areas
  - Evidenced-based practice, prevention and health promotion, clinical examination and diagnosis, acute care of injury and illness, therapeutic interventions, psychosocial strategies and referral, healthcare administration, professional development and responsibility
- CAATE provisional requirements for Athletic Training Professional Master's Programs
  - Academic programs must span a minimum of two academic years; a 4+1 degree does not meet accreditation standards
  - Clinical education must include at least one immersive, full-time experience at least four weeks long, within the academic program
  - Planned interprofessional education across the program
  - Prerequisite knowledge in biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, anatomy, and physiology
  - Program foundational knowledge in statistics, research design, epidemiology, pathophysiology, biomechanics and pathomechanics, exercise physiology, human anatomy, and public health
  - At least three core faculty, each having contemporary clinical expertise in assigned teaching areas, and each with an identified line of scholarship

#### V. Student Demand

Student demand for Athletic Training Professional Master's Programs is expected to grow over the next ten years as the number of Bachelor's programs in North Carolina and the United States are eliminated and societal demand increases. By proactively seeking to plan, establish, and implement an Athletic Training Professional Master's Program prior to the fall 2022 CAATE mandate, these UNC institutions will be better prepared to meet student demand and produce qualified graduates.

Undergraduate students involved in athletics, student government, or other campus organizations often do not enroll in Athletic Training Professional Bachelor's Programs due to the substantial time requirements of professional education programs; many of these programs do not allow admitted students to participate in these extracurricular activities. Placing the professional degree at the Master's level provides an opportunity for these students to be fully engaged in the undergraduate experience and then shift their focus full-time on the professional requirements of athletic training at the graduate level. The *Professional Education in Athletic Training: An Examination of the Professional Degree Level* white paper<sup>3</sup> discussed the importance of having healthcare professional education programs that do not compete with general education, liberal arts, and foundational science requirements because it detracts from the effectiveness of the professional educational experience and the undergraduate educational experience.

Current enrollment in Athletic Training Professional Bachelor’s Programs in North Carolina and the United States are equivalent (Table 1). It is too early to identify if the average enrollment in Athletic Training Professional Master’s Programs in North Carolina will become equivalent with the United States average enrollment. Table 2 provides a summary of Programs in North Carolina and their degree level status. There are eighteen Athletic Training Professional Bachelor’s Programs, thirteen of which provided data for this Preamble, including five of the seven programs that have indicated intentions to voluntarily phase out or withdraw accreditation for their program. It is expected that students from these seven institutions that intend to pursue an athletic training degree would do so at other programs in the state. The five UNC institutions identified in the Preamble are in a position to meet the student demand across the state for students seeking an Athletic Training Professional Master’s Program. Note: Institution specific data, including student survey data, are provided in the Request to Plan documents.

<b>Table 1. Average enrollment in Athletic Training Professional Programs+</b>		
	<b>NC average enrollment</b>	<b>US average enrollment</b>
<b>Bachelor’s Programs*</b>	35.5 (N=13)	37.2 (N=335)
<b>Master’s Programs^</b>	19.5 (N=2)	27.7 (N=39)

+2014-2015 CAATE Annual Report data self-reported by each program.<sup>4</sup>

\*18 Bachelor’s Programs in NC; only 13 provided self-reported data.

\*3 Master’s Programs in NC; 2 provided self-reported data; one is a new program with no data yet to report.

<b>Table 2. Athletic Training Professional Programs in North Carolina</b>			
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Bachelor’s Program developing Master’s Program</b>	<b>Bachelor’s Programs Voluntarily Withdrawing Accreditation</b>	<b>Master’s Programs</b>
<i>Appalachian State University</i>	<i>Public</i>		
<i>UNC Charlotte</i>	<i>Public</i>		
<i>UNC Pembroke</i>	<i>Public</i>		
<i>UNC Wilmington</i>	<i>Public</i>		
<i>Western Carolina University</i>	<i>Public</i>		
Mars Hill University	Private*		
Wingate University	Private*		
Catawba College	Private*		
Methodist University	Private*		
East Carolina University	Public**		Public**
NC Central University		Public	
UNC – Chapel Hill		Public	
Barton College		Private	
Gardner Webb University		Private	
Greensboro College		Private	
Lees-McRae College		Private	
Shaw University		Private	
Campbell University^			
UNC - Greensboro			Public
High Point University			Private
Lenoir-Rhyne University			Private

\*Program Directors indicated they were in the process of requesting a Master’s Program from their respective administrators.

\*\*Currently offering a Bachelor’s Program and revising the BOG approved Master’s Program.

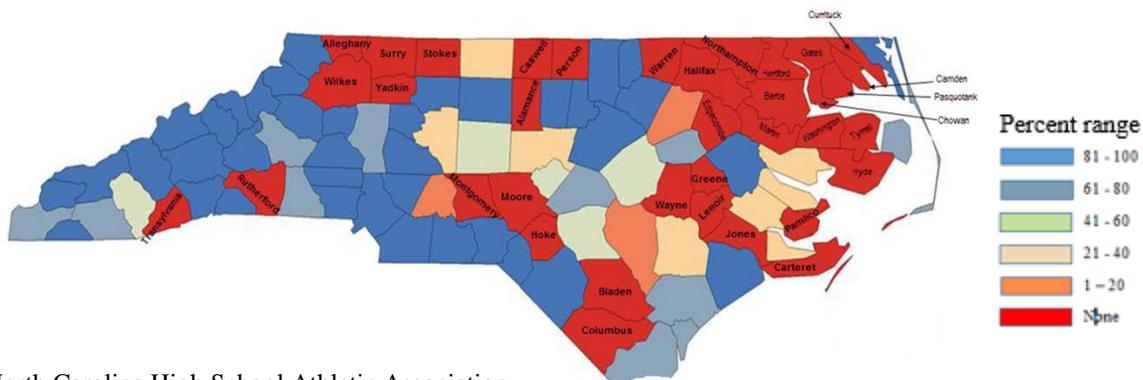
^Current status is unknown at this time.

## VI. Societal Demand

Societal demand for Athletic Trainers is substantial and growing. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 7.8 million student-athletes participated in sports.<sup>6</sup> Athletic Trainers are identified in state laws as key healthcare providers in the recognition, evaluation, and treatment of injuries, including concussions, which occur during sports participation. Having appropriate medical coverage in the middle school and high school setting is essential to prevent injuries and sudden death among student-athletes. Recently, the Korey Stringer Institute conducted a national study<sup>7</sup> on high school athletic training services. The results indicated that while 70% of public secondary schools acknowledged the importance of athletic training services, only 37% of high schools in the United States currently provide full-time athletic training services.

A recent study<sup>8</sup> on athletic training availability in North Carolina public high schools found that only 62% of the 394 public high schools have full-time Athletic Trainers. This study has been presented to several organizations within the state, including healthcare providers, athletics administrators, coaches, and parent organizations, which are seeking to increase the presence of Athletic Trainers at their events. Some North Carolina counties currently have no Athletic Trainers serving their high schools (Figure 1). As the state works to expand athletic training services to all high schools, graduates from Athletic Training Professional Master's Programs will be prepared to fill those positions.

**Figure 1. Percentage of NCHSAA\* member high schools with full time athletic training services**



\*North Carolina High School Athletic Association

Athletic Trainers are becoming an integral part of the job market. The traditional settings for athletic training employment are in colleges and universities (19%), high schools (18%), and professional sports (2%). Athletic Trainers who are employed primarily in these traditional settings while enrolled in an advanced degree program represent 27%. However, 34% of Athletic Trainers are employed in non-traditional settings, such as hospitals or clinics (17%), other uncategorized settings (15%), and emerging settings such as military, public safety, and performing arts (2%).<sup>9</sup> These emerging settings present additional untapped opportunities for growth.

Evidence of societal demand and employability for Athletic Trainers is available from labor market sources, industry reports, professional organizations, and a variety of news sources.

Labor market information indicates strong projections for athletic training employment. The NC Works data projects a 1.8% annual percentage growth between 2012 and 2022 (Table 3). The Bureau of Labor and Statistics<sup>10</sup> projects a 21% growth between 2014 and 2024. A 2011 article in the New York Times<sup>11</sup> listed Athletic Trainers as one of the top ten fastest growing occupations, projecting 6,000 new jobs by 2018. In 2014, Business Insider identified Athletic Training as number five on their list of *The 20 College Majors That Lead To The Most Satisfying Careers*.<sup>12</sup> The five institutions requesting to plan an Athletic Training Professional Master’s Program are poised to meet the growing demand for Athletic Trainers in a variety of employment settings in North Carolina and across the United States.

<b>Table 3. NC Works data – Net growth</b>				
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2012 Estimated Employment</b>	<b>2022 Projected Employment</b>	<b>2012 - 2022 Employment Change</b>	<b>Annual Percent Change</b>
Athletic Trainers	509	610	101	1.8%
All Healthcare Occupations	32,065	39,812	7,747	2.0%
All Occupations	4,263,796	4,812,446	548,650	1.2%

## **VII. Unnecessary Duplication**

The five UNC institutions requesting to plan an Athletic Training Professional Master’s Program are in a position to meet the needs and demands of their respective regions, the state of North Carolina, and surrounding states, without unnecessary duplication. For the five institutions identified in this Preamble, graduates from their respective Athletic Training Professional Programs are successful in finding employment as an Athletic Trainer or enrolling in advanced experiences (e.g., post-professional degree, fellowship, residency, or internship). Table 4 displays the percentage of graduates employed as an Athletic Trainer, including employment in North Carolina. Table 5 displays the percentage of graduates enrolled in another degree or advanced training program (e.g., post-professional degree, fellowship). Table 6 displays a summary of graduate placement. These five institutions are well distributed across the state and graduates are filling available jobs in the state and beyond.

Note: Graduates from Athletic Training Professional Bachelor’s Program who enroll in a post-professional degree are often simultaneously employed as a Graduate Assistant Athletic Trainer in various settings and frequently receive stipends, tuition reimbursement and/or insurance in exchange for the services they provide as Certified Athletic Trainers. This employment decision is chosen to provide a smoother transition to practice for novice Athletic Trainers while they receive advanced practice training. Many employers are converting their graduate assistant positions into internships in anticipation of the degree change. Transitions to practice options for graduates from Athletic Training Professional Master’s Programs are and will be increasingly available via internships, residency and fellowship programs across the United States.

<b>Table 4. NC Athletic Training Professional Bachelor's Programs: Percent of graduates employed as Athletic Trainers</b>						
<b>Institution</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>4 year Mean</b>	<b>Employed in NC</b>
Appalachian State University	93%	72%	94%	92%	88%	47%
UNC Charlotte	82%	54%	67%	75%	70%	73%
UNC Pembroke	86%	41%	33%	75%	59%	82%
UNC Wilmington	92%	100%	100%	67%	90%	39%
Western Carolina University	100%	94%	89%	66%	88%	44%

<b>Table 5: NC Athletic Training Professional Bachelor's Programs: Percent of students enrolled in post-professional degree programs</b>					
<b>Institution</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>4 year Mean</b>
Appalachian State University	7%	14%	0	8%	7%
UNC Charlotte	18%	29%	8%	0	18%
UNC Pembroke	43%	30%	25%	50%	36%
UNC Wilmington	43%	22%	22%	33%	34%
Western Carolina University	0	6%	11%	25%	10%

<b>Table 6: NC Athletic Training Professional Bachelor's Programs: Graduate placement summary (employment or enrolled in post-professional degree programs)</b>					
<b>Institution</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>4 year Mean</b>
Appalachian State University	100%	86%	94%	100%	95%
UNC Charlotte	100%	83%	75%	75%	87.5%
UNC Pembroke	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
UNC Wilmington	100%	100%	100%	33%	85%
Western Carolina University	100%	100%	100%	91%	98%

A summary of a four-year history of enrollment and degrees awarded in Athletic Training Professional Programs currently operating in North Carolina is provided in Table 7. Twenty-one institutions offer Athletic Training Professional Programs in North Carolina; three programs offer a Master's degree and eighteen programs offer a Bachelor's degree. Athletic Training Program Directors were contacted and asked to provide these data from their respective CAATE Annual Report; these data provided were self-reported. Five programs did not provide data. Overall, the total number of Athletic Training Professional Programs in North Carolina and the United States is expected to decrease. Furthermore, each UNC Institution identified in this Preamble is proposing to offer distinct areas of interest in their Athletic Training Professional Master's Programs. Therefore, the establishment of these programs would not create unnecessary duplication.

## Collaboration

Presently, the five universities identified in this Preamble have discussed opportunities for collaboration. However, accreditation requirements can create challenges that limit the level of practical partnerships. Consortium programs require additional funding and compliance with accreditation standards. Online courses must meet the learning outcomes within each program and be offered at a point in time most beneficial for each institution's curricular plan. Shared clinical sites across the state require additional affiliation agreements specific to each program and institution. Even with these potential barriers, there is a genuine willingness amongst the five universities to explore collaborative opportunities during the Request to Establish phase of approval.

The mode of delivery in Athletic Training Professional Programs is largely the same across the state. The curriculum is a combination of structured didactic and clinical courses to meet program and learning outcomes. Didactic courses are traditionally offered in a face-to-face or hybrid format with an occasional online/web-based course. Clinical courses facilitate the knowledge acquired in the didactic courses into skill acquisition and application in authentic, real-time patient care experiences. Didactic courses occur at the institution, whereas the clinical education occurs across a variety of affiliate sites in multiple settings, such as universities/colleges, high schools, clinics/hospitals, industry (e.g., Boeing, GE, Toyota), and physician practices. UNC Online course exchange could be a possible avenue for online courses, such as pharmacology, organization and administration, psychosocial issues and behavioral health, and nutritional concepts.

Guest lecturing across programs in our respective areas of expertise is another low cost opportunity. Utilizing faculty expertise across the UNC system through guest speakers/lecturing, case study reviews, problem based learning scenarios, and journal clubs would be a cost effective and feasible means of collaboration that preserves the hands-on instruction that is essential to teaching clinical skills. Course sequencing could be developed appropriate to the respective institutions and faculty with content expertise could be scheduled to appear via distance learning technologies at various times throughout the year at any of the institutions. Such collaborative efforts would increase students' exposure to athletic training faculty. Furthermore, students would have no additional costs, institutions would have no additional accreditation fees, and faculty workload and responsibilities would have minimal interruption.

While defined and specific details are unknown as this time, the Request to Establish phase will provide an opportunity for programs to explore collaborative experiences that benefit the students and the institution while meeting accreditation requirements. Furthermore, programs can look within their institutions for collaboration with other similar healthcare programs on space, equipment, course delivery, and other resource-sharing opportunities. Such collaborations are not only beneficial to all programs, but largely mandated by accreditation standards requiring interprofessional education across the curriculum.

**Table 7. North Carolina Athletic Training Professional Programs: Four-year enrollment & degrees awarded\***

Institution	Public/ Private	Professional Degree Level	Enrollment/Degrees Awarded			
			2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Lenoir-Rhyne University	Private	Master's	15 / 3	25 / 12	20 / 12	18 / 8
High Point University**	Private	Master's				
UNC Greensboro	Public	Master's	15 / 8	17 / 7	19 / 10	18 / 9
East Carolina University^	Public	Master's				
East Carolina University	Public	Bachelor's	75 / 25	65 / 23	44 / 18	45 / 19
Appalachian State University	Public	Bachelor's	60 / 14	63 / 14	68 / 16	63 / 14
UNC Charlotte	Public	Bachelor's	27 / 11	48 / 17	51 / 12	52 / 16
UNC Pembroke	Public	Bachelor's	31 / 7	27 / 10	24 / 4	15 / 4
UNC Wilmington	Public	Bachelor's	37 / 13	37 / 10	40 / 9	35 / 9
Western Carolina University	Public	Bachelor's	52 / 15	56 / 15	64 / 20	74 / 12
Gardner Webb University	Private	Bachelor's	9 / 1	14 / 4	15 / 4	14 / 5
Mars Hill University	Private	Bachelor's	15 / 4	31 / 5	27 / 6	27 / 13
Wingate University	Private	Bachelor's		31 / 8	28 / 8	31 / 8
NC Central University+	Public	Bachelor's	36 / 9	39 / 7	38 / 17	25 / 9
UNC Chapel Hill+	Public	Bachelor's	47 / 14	43 / 15	41 / 12	45 / 12
Barton College+	Private	Bachelor's	2 / 2	5 / 5	2 / 2	5 / 5
Greensboro College+	Private	Bachelor's	18 / 8	18 / 5	20 / 3	18 / 9
Catawba College	Private	Bachelor's				
Lees-McRae College+	Private	Bachelor's				
Shaw University+	Private	Bachelor's				
Campbell University#	Private	Bachelor's				
Methodist University	Private	Bachelor's				

\*The point of program enrollment (ie, freshman versus sophomore year) varies between programs.

\*\*First cohort admitted Fall 2016; no four year data available from 2012-2016.

+Indicated a voluntary withdrawal of accreditation.

^Currently offering an Athletic Training Professional Bachelor's Program and revising the BOG approved Athletic Training Professional Master's Program.

#current status is unknown at this time.

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The National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) and the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE), with the full support of the Board of Certification and the NATA Research and Education foundation, announced on May 20, 2015 that the entry-level professional degree in athletic training will change to the master's level (found at:

<http://www.atstrategicalliance.org/statements/strategic-alliance-degree-statement>).

This decision will eliminate all undergraduate athletic training degree programs nationally. To keep with the required standards of the profession, we must transition our BSAT degree to an MSAT degree within the next seven years.

The MSAT is a two-year 90-credit degree program. The target audience will be students with an undergraduate degree in Exercise Science or related field of study that want to become athletic trainers. Upon completion of the degree students would sit for the national certification exam and will enter the work force as a certified athletic trainer. Athletic trainers are highly qualified, multi-skilled health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide preventative services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. Employment settings include hospitals, physician practices, outpatient rehabilitation centers, industrial facilities, colleges and universities, and secondary schools. The transition to the MSAT degree will be supported by the newly completed Belk Gymnasium renovations (costing ~\$18.7 million). The athletic training program will occupy over 3700 square feet of renovated state-of-the-art facilities, to include a clinical classroom, a hydrotherapy room, and a renovated Biodynamics Laboratory supporting Athletic Training faculty. In addition to the Belk Gym facility renovations, the University has invested over \$100,000 in new/upgraded equipment to support the athletic training teaching and research programs within the past year. The new facilities and equipment will serve as outstanding recruiting tools.

- b. How does the proposed program align with system, institutional and unit missions and strategic plans?

First, the transition to a MSAT contributes to the goals of the University and College to increase graduate enrollment to comprise 25% of the total UNC Charlotte student enrollment. Secondly, the B.S. in athletic training program is engaged in community partnerships throughout the Charlotte region, which supports the University's and College's missions to be a community-engaged University. The B.S. in athletic training currently has students in clinical practicum rotations at 19 different sites. These 19 different sites include local universities/colleges, high schools (both rural and urban), and clinical facilities. We would continue to maintain and increase these clinical practicum sites when we transition from a BSAT degree to an MSAT degree. UNC Charlotte maintains a particular commitment to addressing the cultural, economic, environmental, health and social needs of the greater Charlotte region. Our students and faculty are active at these 19 sites impacting the health and social needs of the patients being treated at those sites while educating patients on prevention, care and treatment of illness and injury. Additionally, since these clinical sites cover different patient populations (age, gender, sports activities, race, socioeconomic status), our students increase their cultural competence and are better prepared to meet the health care needs of a diverse society upon graduation. UNC Charlotte is North Carolina's urban research university. Working with the community and with the aforementioned clinical sites affords students as well as research faculty access to data that can have significant impact on the field of sports medicine and the population at large. Moreover, the transition of the B.S. in athletic training to an MSAT will allow us to expand our clinical practicums to areas outside of the Charlotte area.

The MSAT at UNC Charlotte will support the mission and strategic plan of UNC Charlotte to improve access, foster research, promote diversity and connect to the community as outlined in the 2010-2015 UNC Charlotte Strategic Plan. Additionally, it contributes to the University and College goals to increase graduate enrollment to comprise 25% of the total UNC Charlotte student enrollment. The MSAT program will be available to students who have a bachelor's degree in a related field and meet the required pre-requisites of the program. Additionally, students currently enrolled our B.S. in Exercise Science Program will have the ability to apply to an early entry option where they would graduate in five years with both the B.S. in Exercise Science and MSAT degrees. This will improve access to the MSAT Program and increase the number of students that are able to enroll in our program and graduate, thereby helping to increase our enrollment and retention to ~28 students per cohort. Additionally, we will offer the second year of coursework entirely online, which will improve access to the program. Having an online second-year program allows students to relocate elsewhere after the first year of the program if they desire. During the second year they could live at more preferred geographic locations, giving students the freedom to do clinical rotations at facilities that are best suited for their professional goals and personal needs. This will also help expand our clinical opportunities beyond the Charlotte region and thereby further meet the engagements initiatives in UNC Charlotte's mission statement.

Research is a significant component of the athletic training program, and is one of the UNC Charlotte BSAT Program strengths. Over 58% of our current BSAT students participate in research independent study. These independent studies range from students helping with research projects to students conducting their own research through the honors program in the department. The MSAT will increase the research aspect of the educational program, which will better prepare students in the process of conducting and analyzing research and employing those findings in clinical practice. Using the appropriate evidence to drive patient care is a major part of an effective athletic trainer's job. Having access to patients and working at numerous clinical sites allows our students abundant opportunities for research experiences. One of the caveats of moving the athletic training degree from a bachelor's to a master's degree is a greater ability to collaborate and work with other allied health professionals as mandated in the accreditation standards for athletic training. Transitioning to a MSAT program will promote further research collaborations amongst the various research scopes within the Department of Kinesiology (Clinical Exercise Physiology, Biodynamics, Systems Physiology), as well as the College of Health and Human Services (Nursing, Social Work, Public Health) and provide great opportunities for collaborative research. These collaborations will enforce the principles of interdisciplinary healthcare, which is a driving force behind much recent advancement in the medical field.

In addition to the research collaborations in the Department of Kinesiology and the College of Health and Human Services, there are opportunities to examine courses that could be shared between the various clinical master's degrees offered. The accreditation body for athletic training programs is beginning to examine inter-professional education and the need for more cross-listed coursework. There is the potential for the MSAT to share coursework with the Clinical Exercise Physiology concentration of the M.S. in Kinesiology program. There are courses currently offered in the numerous Nursing master's degree programs as well as Public Health Sciences, which, if available, could serve students in our MSAT program (and vice-versa). Additionally, much of the coursework could be open to students in other related master's degree programs. Similar to research, this opportunity to have students in different master's degree programs (Athletic Training, Clinical Exercise Physiology, Nursing, and Public Health) in some of the same courses could serve as an invaluable learning experience for all students. It would strengthen the MSAT Program by having that inter-professional education, which is important for clinical practice.

Another example of overlap between the proposed program and existing programs is that all four athletic training faculty positions also support the Pre-Kinesiology, Exercise Science, and/or M.S. in Kinesiology Programs. We currently have four full-time faculty members who teach in the BSAT Program. The BSAT Program faculty currently teach only 1.38 FTE's worth of credit hours (33 credit hours per year) that are exclusive to the BSAT Program. The rest of the credit hours required for BSAT students to complete their upper-division coursework are from courses shared with other programs. Combined, the total credit hours required to graduate from the BSAT Program equate to 2.25 FTE's worth of faculty time, which is comparable to the entry-level MSAT Program at UNC Greensboro, requiring 2 FTEs. With the transition to a MSAT, our Athletic Training faculty teaching roles would not change. We feel it is an advantage to maintain current Athletic Training faculty teaching roles within undergraduate courses so that we can better engage with and recruit students who are interested in our early enrollment option for the MSAT.

Our 19 clinical sites provide a great avenue for connecting with our community. Our athletic trainers and students not only work and interact with the athletic trainers employed at those sites but other medical professionals, athletic directors, coaches and, most importantly, athletes and their respective families. As we transition to the MSAT, we will increase our clinical sites to accommodate student population. We will be able to increase our number of clinical sites to accommodate our planned increase in student numbers by adding more high schools in the Charlotte region, and adding more clinical sites outside of the region for students that want to relocate during the online component of the program. We have students currently completing clinical practicums at Davidson College, Johnson C. Smith University, and Queens University, as well as on campus at UNC Charlotte. We also have students at high schools (public and private) and orthopedic rehabilitation centers. No other athletic training program in the state has clinical placements in such diverse settings. By expanding our clinical sites in and outside the Charlotte region, we will increase the number of athletic trainers, physicians, physical therapists, athletic directors, parents, and hospital administrators with whom we interact, which all helps connect UNC Charlotte with the community.

In terms of diversity, our current BSAT Program is comprised of 14% African American students, 10% Asian students, and 2% Hispanic students. This is significantly above the average of the membership of the National Athletic Trainers Association (2% African American, 3% Asian). Anecdotally, UNC Charlotte is historically one of the most, if not the most, diverse, athletic training education programs nationwide. As North Carolina's urban research institution, we have the ability to recruit, enroll, and graduate a diverse group of students. Our students also have the ability to work and interact with a diverse group of clinicians and patients at our multiple clinical sites. We feel the diversity of the students as well as our clinical sites is one of the strongest assets of our BSAT Program and one we will continue to grow as we transition to the MSAT Program.

- c. What student-level educational objectives will be met by the proposed program?

The Educational Objectives of the MSAT will be:

- Develop and utilize decision-making skills related to evidence based practice.
- Analyze ways to prevent injury and illness, and educate best health promotion practices.
- Ability to make best clinical decisions related to clinical examination and diagnosis.
- Ability to make the best clinical decisions for acute care of injuries and illnesses.
- Analyze the rehabilitation process after injury and illness and how to best apply exercise to help return patients to optimal function.

- Analyze the psychosocial aspects of injury and rehabilitation, and the appropriate time for referral.
- Analyze the administrative aspect of athletic training and how to work with and interact with different allied health professionals.
- Analyze the need for continued professional development and growth to keep up with changes in the medical field.

3. Student Demand. Provide documentation of student demand. Discuss the extent to which students will be drawn from a pool of students not previously served by the institution.

Our current survey data indicate very strong support for an MSAT program from a number of groups of potential enrollees. In July 2015, we conducted an online survey of current students in the UNC Charlotte BSAT program. We sent the surveys to a total of 50 current students and graduates and received 30 responses (60% response rate). We asked whether they would have been interested in an MSAT program if an undergraduate degree in athletic training had not been available at the time they were selecting a major. The overwhelming majority (21; 70.0%) answered that they would have been interested (see table below). Since this program is a professional preparation program for those interested in athletic training, it will not compete with existing professional programs on campus.

**Current Athletic Training Students**

**Question:** If an undergraduate degree in athletic training was not an option when you were originally applying to the AT program, would you have been interested in an entry level master’s in athletic training program at UNC Charlotte?

Option	# of Responses	Response %
Yes	21	70.0%
No	9	30.0%

In July 2015, we asked the same question to our current pre-kinesiology students. We sent the surveys to a total of 150 pre-kinesiology students and received 63 responses (42% response rate). These students are freshman and sophomores, and either plan on majoring in Athletic Training or Exercise Science. We asked whether they would be interested in an MSAT program at UNC Charlotte if the only way that they could be become an athletic trainer were through a master’s degree. Out of 63 responses, 51 (81.0%) answered that they would be interested compared to 12 (19.0%) who answered that they would not be interested (see table below).

**Pre-kinesiology Students**

**Question:** If athletic training was no longer offered at the bachelor’s degree level and the only way you could become an athletic trainer was through an entry level master’s program (similar to PA School), would you be interested in attending an entry-level master’s program at UNC Charlotte?

Option	# of Responses	Response %
Yes	51	81.0%
No	12	19.0%

Lastly, in July 2015, we surveyed students currently in the B.S. in Exercise Science program. We sent the surveys to a total of 429 current Exercise Science students, receiving 61 responses (14% response rate). These students would theoretically be able

to apply and begin the MSAT program during their senior year in the Exercise Science program. We asked whether they would be interested in an early-entry MSAT program at UNC Charlotte. Out of 61 responses, 54 (88.5%) answered that they would be interested, and 7 (11.5%) answered that they would not be interested (see table below).

**Exercise Science Students**

**Question:** Would you be interested in an early entry master's degree in athletic training at UNC Charlotte? This would allow you to earn your bachelor's degree in exercise science as well as your master's degree in athletic training in 5 years.

Option	# of Responses	Response %
Yes	54	88.5%
No	7	11.5%

Our surveys demonstrate a need and desire from current students enrolled in athletic training, exercise science and pre-kinesiology at UNC Charlotte. Out of 154 that replied to the survey, 105 students (68%) would be interested in an MSAT at UNC Charlotte. We feel this demand as well as external recruitment of students would allow us to have a competitive admission process and meet our enrollment expectations. In addition, enrollment in the existing BSAT program continues to rise, indicating continued interest in the field (see Question 5 below).

4. Societal demand. Provide evidence of societal demand and employability of graduates from each of the following source types.
  - a. Labor market information (projections, job posting analyses, and wages)
    - i. specific to North Carolina (such as ncworks.gov, nctower.com, outside vendors such as Burning Glass)

Athletic trainers are currently employed to manage the healthcare of the physically active patient in hospitals, physician practices, outpatient rehabilitation centers, industrial facilities, colleges and universities, and secondary schools. With the increased societal emphasis on appropriate management of this patient population, it is reasonable to predict that the need for athletic trainers will grow significantly in the near future. This societal trend is evidenced currently by the extraordinary amount of interest in the appropriate care of the concussed athlete.

North Carolina is a state with a population of approximately 9.7 million. Of this, 2.3 million (23.7%) live in the Greater Charlotte Regional Partnership Zone served directly by the UNC Charlotte. Over 30% of the current jobs posted on NC Works Online are posted within this zone. Of these jobs, the employers with the second and third highest job postings (Carolinas Healthcare System and Novant Health, Inc.) are both employers of athletic trainers. Currently (October 2015), there are 37 athletic training positions posted on NC Works Online. Although this may appear low, most athletic training positions begin in the summer so typically employers do not begin advertising until the spring.

- ii. available from national occupational and industry projections (such as BLS).

Occupation profile:

Athletic trainers specialize in preventing, diagnosing, and treating muscle and bone injuries and illnesses. Many athletic trainers work in educational settings, such as colleges or universities. Others work in physicians' offices or for professional sports

teams. Currently athletic trainers need at least a bachelor's degree in order to practice. In most states, athletic trainers need a license or certification; requirements vary by state. Athletic trainers in the state of North Carolina must pass a credentialing examination and be licensed by the North Carolina Board of Athletic Trainer Examiners in order to practice. However, in the next 7 years, athletic trainers will be required to have a master's degree to be an entry level athletic trainer as mandated by the Board of Certification and accrediting body (CAATE).

**Industry profile:**

Athletic trainers are a part of the Ambulatory Health Care Services subsector of the Health Care and Social Assistance Sector as determined by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Industries in the Ambulatory Health Care Services subsector provide health care services directly or indirectly to ambulatory patients and do not usually provide inpatient services. As of the fourth quarter of 2014, there are 15,654 establishments with 199,408 employees providing ambulatory health care services in North Carolina.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics for athletic training predicts a 21.4% increase in jobs nationwide for athletic trainers over a ten year period ending in 2022, faster than the average of all occupations. Additionally, a 2015 study was commissioned by the National Athletic Trainers' Association to understand the economic impact of transitioning athletic training professional education to the master's degree (see <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes299091.htm#ind>). This study indicates that, although the profession of athletic training is predicted to grow by 21.4%, the number of graduates from the current 364 programs will exceed that demand. However, with the transition from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree for professional preparation it is predicted that the number of academic programs will decrease, thereby improving the job market for athletic trainers.

North Carolina projects jobs in athletic training will increase at a rate of 1.8%/year during the 10-year period of 2012-2022. The median salary in 2014 for athletic trainers in North Carolina was \$39,270. (National Athletic Trainers Association 2014 Salary Survey)

b. Projections from professional associations or industry reports

There are currently 876 job postings listed on the Career Center for athletic trainers sponsored by the National Athletic Trainers' Association. This is the most common site for athletic training job postings and therefore is the best indicator of athletic training related job demographics. Details on these postings can be found in the table below.

<b>Job Setting</b>	<b>Number of Current Job Postings (07/26/2015)</b>
Amateur/Recreation/Youth Sports	7
Business/Sales/Marketing	2
Clinic	173
College/University	293
Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement	15
Hospital	107
Independent Contractor	4
Industrial/Occupational/Corporate	26
Military/Law Enforcement/ Government/Performing Arts	2
Professional Sports	5
Secondary Schools	69
Other	115
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>818</b>

- c. Other (alumni surveys, insights from existing programs, etc.)

From 2001 to 2011, the state of North Carolina had an 18.5% population increase while the Greater Charlotte Regional Partnership Zone saw an increase of 23.4%. As the population in North Carolina and the Greater Charlotte Regional Partnership Zone grows so will the need for qualified health care professionals. In 2007, in response to numerous high profile high school sport related deaths, the legislature was contemplating a funded mandate for athletic trainers in all public high schools. Unfortunately, the economic downturn of 2008 made funding of this legislation impossible. Nevertheless, since then, public-private partnerships between high schools and healthcare facilities has created a notable number of new athletic training jobs in the greater Charlotte region. According to data obtained from the North Carolina Athletic Trainers' Association there has been an almost 400% increase in high school related athletic training jobs in the greater Charlotte area since 2010. As the presence of an athletic trainer at high school athletic events becomes the standard, a greatly increasing number of parents will demand these qualified caregivers at all high schools across the state. The need for athletic trainers in the college and university setting has expanded greatly in the last 20 years as well. For example, in 2000, the Department of Athletics at UNC Charlotte employed 2 full-time athletic trainers and 3 graduate assistants to provide care for 16 intercollegiate sport teams. Today, coverage is provided for the 17 intercollegiate teams with 7 full time staff and 5 full-time interns. This trend will continue to grow as collegiate athletic teams demand full-time dedicated care throughout the year.

5. Unnecessary duplication.

- a. List all other public and private four-year institutions of higher education in North Carolina currently operating programs similar to the proposed new degree program, including their mode of delivery. Show a four-year history of enrollments and degrees awarded in similar programs offered at other UNC institutions (using the format below for each institution with a similar program); describe what was learned in consultation with each program regarding their experience with student demand and job placement. Indicate how their experiences influenced your enrollment projections.

Please see the *Preamble* (separate document) for specific information in regard to history of enrollment and degrees awarded in programs at other UNC institutions that are similar to the MSAT proposed in this document. There are currently 21 athletic training programs in the state of North Carolina. Of the 21, 3 are currently offering the MSAT degree to which we are planning to transition. Of the remaining 18 schools, 6 will not be pursuing the transition to the Master's degree and thus will no longer offer a program (the status of Campbell University is currently unknown).

Based on the projected decrease in athletic training programs in the state, our previous enrollment data, and enrollment at other institutions in the state, we plan to enroll 20 students in our first MSAT cohort, 24 students in the second cohort, and 28 students in the third cohort. Based upon the number of students that we have apply to our current undergraduate athletic training program (average = 54 students per year over the past 3 years), our large undergraduate Exercise Science Student population (current enrollment = 429 students) from which we will recruit to the MSAT, and the population and diversity of the Charlotte region, we predict that will be able to meet the above MSAT enrollment goals.

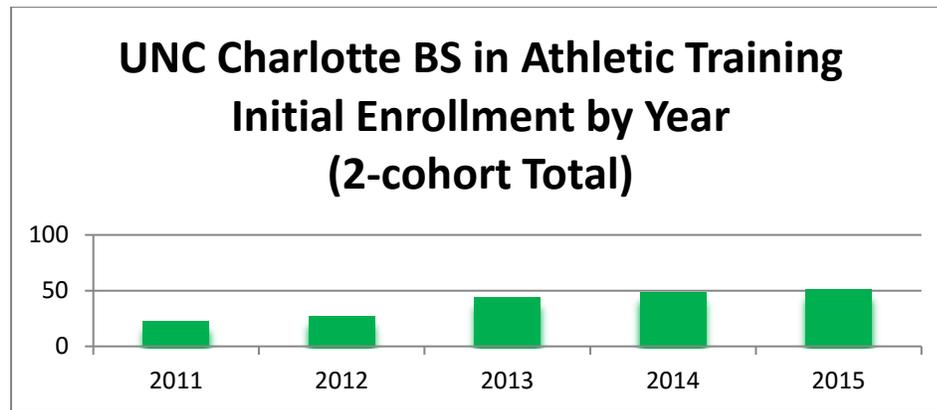
At UNC Charlotte, our 4 year mean for graduates working as athletic trainers after graduation is 70%. However, it is important to note, that average of 70% are students that wanted to be employed as athletic trainers. The remaining students (4 year average of 30%) either planned on entering graduate school or had decided to obtain different employment opportunities (personal training, strength and conditioning). So for students that want to work as an athletic trainer after graduation we have had 100% job placement for students that want to work as an Athletic Trainer. With the number of programs in the state decreasing, and thus less graduates in the state the number of job opportunities will go up and athletic trainers will be in greater demand.

The current BSAT Program at UNC charlotte has an excellent history of success. Based upon this history, we anticipate a very successful transition to, and implementation of, the new MSAT degree program. The tables and text below provide evidence of the success of the UNC Charlotte BSAT program relative to other UNC System Institutions.

**UNC Charlotte Athletic Training Program:**

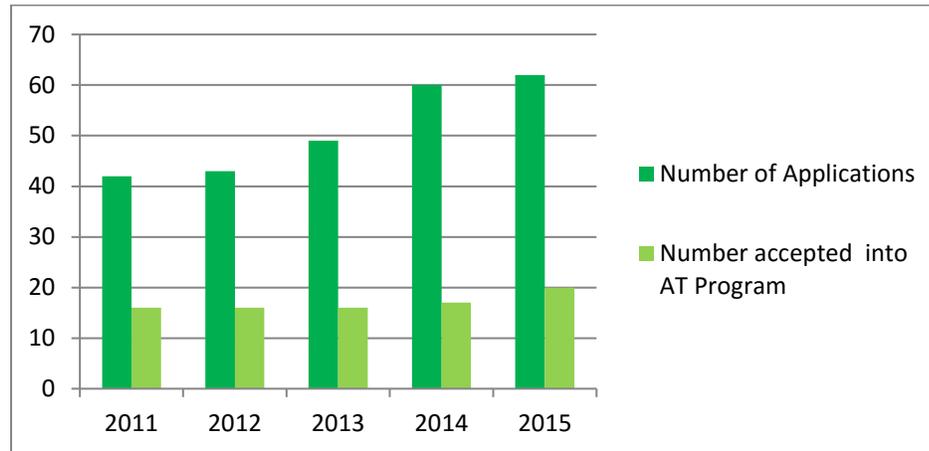
Program Title: BS in Athletic Training

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Enrollment	27	48	51	52
Degrees-awarded	11	17	12	16



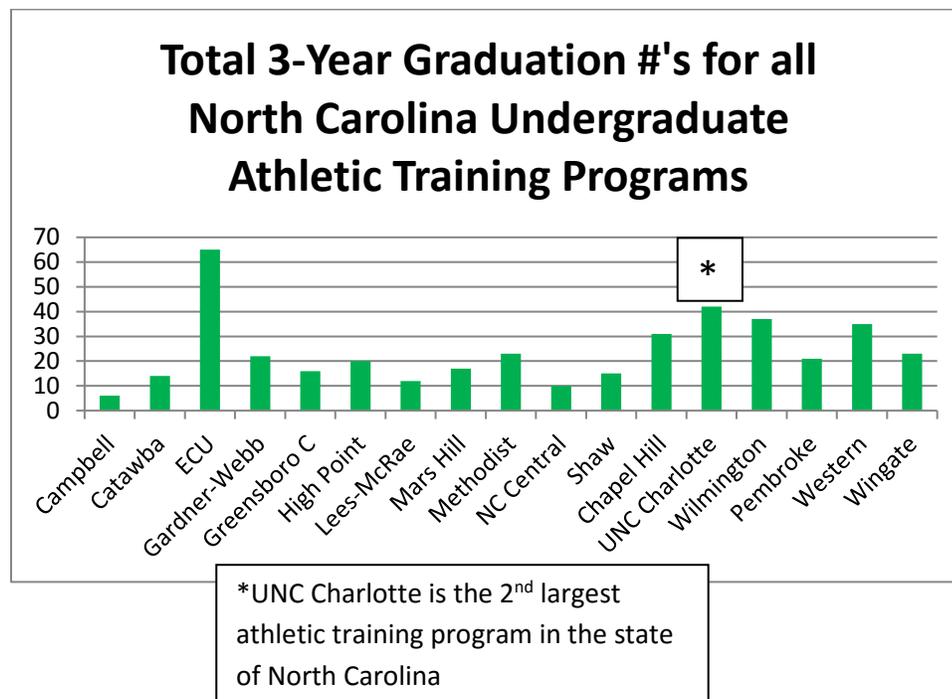
Note that the above figure represents initial enrollment numbers. On average, we have approximately 50 students applying to the BSAT Program each year. Standards for acceptance into the BSAT are high – we have averaged a 34.4% acceptance rate over the past 5 years (see below) of the applicants for this major are accepted each year. Although the minimum for entry into the program is a 2.5 GPA and C or better in all pre-requisite courses, students admitted to the program typically have over a 3.0 GPA and B's or better in all pre-requisite courses. We have been increasing our initial class enrollment size each year over the past five years to meet (and exceed) the enrollment growth rate at UNC Charlotte. Our enrollment numbers have historically been limited by the size of our classes. Due to the clinical nature of the program, we require smaller class sizes to ensure students receive appropriate interaction with faculty. However, we have adapted over the past few years to increase enrollment, which will soon be reflected in graduation numbers to follow.

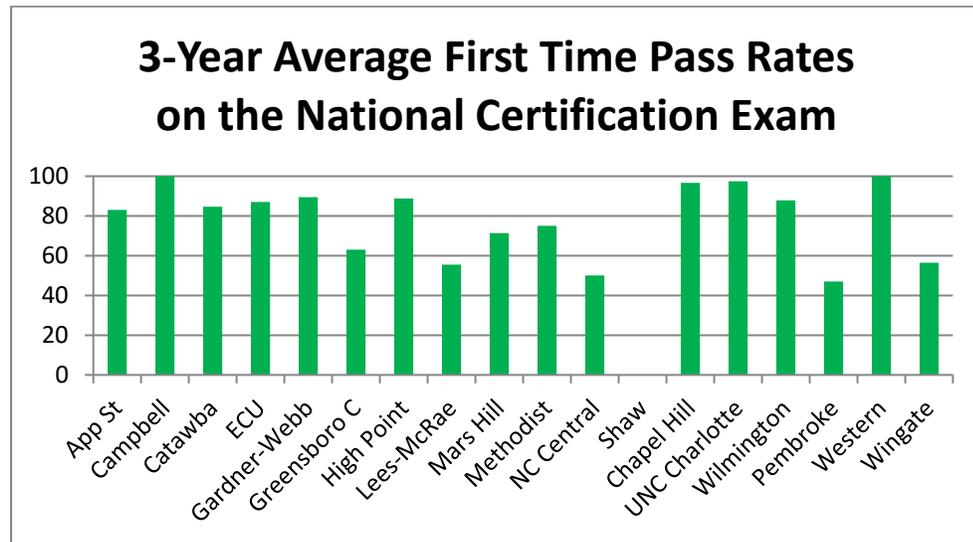
### Applicant and Acceptance Numbers for the UNC Charlotte BSAT Program



Even after a selective screening process, students who are accepted into the BSAT Program find it very challenging. Due to the rigor of the BSAT, retention rates in the program averaged 84.6% over the past three years. Students leave the program for academic reasons or simply the desire to switch to a less-rigorous major. We fully expect that the switch to the MSAT will result in higher retention rates (typical of graduate programs), resulting in more overall enrollment and more graduates.

Even before our highest enrollment numbers in the past two years (classes of 2016 and 2017) the UNC Charlotte BSAT had the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest number of athletic training graduates per year in the state of North Carolina. Moreover, even with this larger program compared to other public and private institutions in the state, we have maintained excellent quality as indicated by one of the highest first-time pass rates on the national certification examination within N.C. and within the U.S. (UNC Charlotte pass rate of 97.5%, compared to a national average of 81.6%). These data are shown in the figures below. We have an outstanding BSAT Program that will continue to be excellent with the transition to an MSAT.





- c. Identify opportunities for collaboration with institutions offering related degrees and discuss what steps have been or will be taken to actively pursue those opportunities where appropriate and advantageous.

Currently, we have had regular conference calls with the following programs: Appalachian State, East Carolina, Western Carolina, UNC Pembroke, and UNC Wilmington to discuss opportunities for collaboration. We have discussed placing several courses online (Administration, Evidence Based Practice, Pharmacology) that could be shared across institutions as well as sharing clinical sites. The sharing of clinical sites would be a great benefit to the student. Students could gain different clinical experiences across the state. Additionally, we plan to work with units in our College (Nursing, Public Health) as well as in our department (MS in Kinesiology, MS in Respiratory Therapy) to offer our students interdisciplinary education. Additional details on collaboration opportunities are discussed in the *Preamble*.

- d. Present documentation that the establishment of this program would not create unnecessary program duplication. In cases where other UNC institutions provide similar online, site-based distance education, or off-campus programs, directly address how the proposed program meets unmet need.

The method of enrollment (early entry option and traditional master's degree) and our distance education portion of the program make our program significantly different than the other UNC system programs currently transitioning. As our program develops, we will continue to change and modify the degree to ensure UNC Charlotte stands out and does not create unnecessary program duplication as other programs in the state transition to a master's in athletic training degree. As stated earlier, employment of athletic trainers is projected to grow 21.4 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations. As people become more aware of sports-related injuries at a young age, demand for athletic trainers is expected to increase, most significantly in colleges, universities, secondary schools, and youth leagues. So even with other MSAT programs in the state and region we feel demand for students is strong and transitioning helps meet the job demand.

6. Enrollment. Estimate the total number of students that would be enrolled in the program during the first year of operation and in each delivery mode (campus, online, site – add lines as needed):

*Delivery Mode\_Campus\_\_ Full-Time \_\_\_20\_\_\_ Part-Time \_\_\_\_\_*

Estimate the total number of students that would be enrolled in the program during the fourth year of operation and in each delivery mode (campus, online, site – add lines as needed):

*Delivery Mode\_Campus\_\_ Full-Time \_\_\_20\_\_\_ Part-Time \_\_\_\_\_*

*Delivery Mode\_Online\_\_ Full-Time \_\_\_20\_\_\_ Part-Time \_\_\_\_\_*

7. Resources. Will any of the resources listed below be required to deliver this program? (If yes, please briefly explain in the space below each item, state the estimated new dollars required at steady state after four years, and state the source of the new funding and resources required.)

a. New Faculty: Yes  No

b. Faculty Program Coordination: Yes  No

c. Additional Library Resources: Yes  No

d. Additional Facilities and Equipment: Yes  No

e. Additional Other Program Support: Yes  No

(for example, additional administrative staff, new Master's program graduate student assistantships, etc.)

**In order to cover the new courses we would have to develop for the Masters of Science in Athletic Training we will be asking for 2 new faculty.**

8. Curriculum leverage. Will the proposed program require development of any new courses? If yes, briefly explain.

**Yes. Based on the draft of new educational competencies for the Masters of Science in Athletic Training curriculum we would have to create new courses in addition to transitioning our current undergraduate courses to the graduate level.**

9. Funding Sources. Does the program require enrollment growth funding in order to be implemented and sustained? If so, can the campus implement and sustain the program should enrollment growth funding be unavailable? Letters of commitment should be provided.

**No, enrollment growth funding is not needed in order for the program to be implemented and sustained.**

9a. For graduate programs only:

Does the program require a tuition differential or program specific fee in order to be implemented and sustained? No

- i. If yes, state the amount of tuition differential or fee being considered, and give a brief justification.
- ii. Can the campus implement and sustain the program if the tuition differential or program fee is not approved? Letters of commitment from the Chancellor and/or Chief Academic Officer should be provided.

10. For doctoral programs only: N/A

- a. Describe the research and scholarly infrastructure in place (including faculty) to support the proposed program.
- b. Describe the method of financing the proposed new program (including extramural research funding and other sources) and indicate the extent to which additional state funding may be required.
- c. State the number, amount, and source of proposed graduate student stipends and related tuition benefits that will be required to initiate the program.

11. Contact. List the names, titles, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of the person(s) responsible for planning the proposed program.

Tricia Turner, PhD, ATC, LAT, Associate Professor, Athletic Training Program Director  
[Thubbar1@uncc.edu](mailto:Thubbar1@uncc.edu), 704-687-0868

Bret Wood, MS, ATC, LAT, Lecturer, Clinical Coordinator Athletic Training Program  
[bawood@uncc.edu](mailto:bawood@uncc.edu), 704-687-0872

This request for authorization to plan a new program has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate campus committees and authorities.

Chancellor: Philip A. Nelson Date: 1/18/17

Chancellor (Joint Partner Campus): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_