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Proposal for a New Degree Program

I. Information and Rationale

A. Primary Contact Information

Institution: University of North Alabama

Contact: Dr. Katie Kinney

Title: Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Email: kckinney@una.edu

Telephone: (256) 765-4258

B. Program Information

Date of Proposal Submission: 4/19/2024

Award Level: Master's Degree

Award Nomenclature (e.g., BS, MBA): MS

Field of Study/Program Title: Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

CIP Code (6-digit): 51.2306

C. Administration of the Program

Name of Dean and College: Dr. Tera Kirkman and Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions

Name of Department/Division: Graduate Programs Department

Name of Chairperson: Dr. Kristy Oden

D. Implementation Information

Proposed Program Implementation Date: 8/3/2026

Anticipated Date of Approval from Institutional Governing Board: 6/3/2024

Anticipated Date of ACHE Meeting to Vote on Proposal: 6/14/2024

SACSCOC Sub Change Requirement (Notification, Approval, or NA): Approval

Other Considerations for Timing and Approval (e.g., upcoming SACSCOC review):

Approval from the Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) in December 2025.

E. Concise Program Description

Include general opportunities for work-based and/or experiential learning, if applicable.

The University of North Alabama is an accredited institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. It is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The mission of the University of North



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Alabama is to be innovative, inclusive, engaged, evolving, and global. The 2019-2024 strategic plan of the University includes the following themes: transformational learning experiences, academic excellence, innovation, diversity and inclusion, financial stability, and institutional identity. The proposed Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program (OTM) is intended to provide graduate-level preparation to advance the professional opportunities of baccalaureate students seeking employment in the occupational therapy profession. The program is also intended to assist in meeting the needs of healthcare professionals within North Alabama. The goal of the proposed OTM program is to graduate individuals who can provide an advanced level of care and possess a higher level of knowledge in the profession of occupational therapy (OT) and are prepared to administer compassionate, person-centered care for clients across the lifespan.

F. Specific Rationale (Strengths) for the Program

List 3 – 5 strengths of the proposed program as specific rationale for recommending approval of this proposal.

1. To expand the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions and the University of North Alabama's degree offerings.
2. To provide graduate-level preparation to advance the professional opportunities of baccalaureate students seeking employment in the occupational therapy profession.
3. To assist in meeting the occupational therapist employment needs of stakeholders as well as the occupational therapy needs of clients throughout the north Alabama region.

List external entities (more may be added) that may have supplied letters of support attesting to the program's strengths and attach letters with the proposal at the end of this document.

1. North Alabama Medical Center
2. Helen Keller Hospital
3. JW Sommers Rehabilitation Facility
4. Stepping Stones Pediatric Therapy, Inc.
5. North Alabama Bone and Joint Rehabilitation
6. Cypress Cove Nursing and Rehabilitation Facility
7. Decatur Morgan Hospital – West Campus
8. Huntsville Hospital
9. Easter Seals/ Reach Pediatrics
10. United Cerebral Palsy of NW Alabama
11. Mitchell Hollingsworth Nursing and Rehabilitation Center

II. Background with Context

A. Student Learning Outcomes

List four (4) to seven (7) of the student learning outcomes of the program.

1. Integrate knowledge, competencies, and skills of a professional occupational therapist into clinical practice.
2. Appraise evidence-based research in clinical practice to ensure quality care across the lifespan.
3. Incorporate ethical decision-making, technology, and communication skills to provide culturally competent care.
4. Network effectively with healthcare team members to improve health outcomes for diverse populations.
5. Develop effective leadership skills to advance the occupational therapy profession.



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B. Similar Programs at Other Alabama Public Institutions

List programs at other Alabama public institutions of the same degree level and the same (or similar) CIP codes. If no similar programs exist within Alabama, list similar programs offered within the 16 SREB states. If the proposed program duplicates, closely resembles, or is similar to any other offerings in the state, provide justification for any potential duplication.

CIP Code	Degree Title	Institution with Similar Program	Justification for Duplication
51.2306	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy	Alabama State University	208 miles away from University of North Alabama
51.2306	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy	University of Alabama Birmingham	Accreditation is Inactive
51.2306	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy	University of South Alabama	335 miles away from University of North Alabama
51.2306	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy	Tuskegee University	Probationary Accreditation and 244 miles away from University of North Alabama

C. Relationship to Existing Programs within the Institution

1. Is the proposed program associated with any existing offerings within the institution, including options within current degree programs? Yes No

(Note: Most new programs have some relationship to existing offerings, e.g., through shared courses or resources). If yes, complete the following table. If this is a graduate program, list any existing undergraduate programs which are directly or indirectly related. If this is a doctoral program, also list related master's programs.

Related Degree Program Level	Related Degree Program Title	Explanation of the Relationship Between the Programs

2. Will this program replace any existing programs or specializations, options, or concentrations? Yes No

If yes, please explain.

3. Will the program compete with any current internal offerings? Yes No

If yes, please explain.

D. Collaboration

- Have collaborations with other institutions or external entities been explored? Yes No



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If yes, provide a brief explanation indicating those collaboration plan(s) for the proposed program.

Have any collaborations within your institution been explored? Yes No

If yes, provide a brief explanation indicating those collaboration plan(s) for the proposed program.

Discussions regarding collaborative efforts to develop and teach a course within the OT program have occurred with the Department of Kinesiology. A kinesiology faculty member could potentially develop and teach the Applied Kinesiology course.

E. Specialized Accreditation

1. Will this program have any external accreditation requirements in addition to the institution's SACSCOC program requirements? Yes No

If yes, list the name(s) of the specialized accrediting organization(s) and the anticipated timeframe of the application process.

Accreditation of this program will be obtained through the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). The institution plans to seek this accreditation to ensure the OT program meets the standards necessary to prepare students for credentialing and employment. ACOTE accreditation is required for students to be eligible for the National Board Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification examination.

2. Does your institution intend to pursue any other non-required accrediting organizations for the program? Yes No

If yes, list the name(s) of the organization(s) and the purpose of the pursuit.

If there are plans to pursue non-required external accreditation at a later date, list the name(s) and why the institution is not pursuing them at this time.

Note: Check *No* to indicate that non-required external accreditation will not be pursued, which requires no explanation.

F. Professional Licensure/Certification

Please explain if professional licensure or industry certification is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations selected. Be sure to note which organization(s) grants licensure or certification.

To practice as an OT, individuals must pass the National Board of Certification in Occupational Therapy exam. This program's clinical experiences and didactic coursework will be based upon ACOTE standards and prepare students for examination, credentialing, and entry-level employment as certified occupational therapists.



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G. Additional Education/Training

Please explain whether further education/training is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations selected.

Additional education and training are not required for graduates of the MSOT program to gain entry-level employment in the field.

H. Admissions

Will this program have any additional admissions requirements beyond the institution's standard admissions process/policies for this degree level? Yes No

If yes, describe any other special admissions or curricular requirements, including any prior education or work experience required for acceptance into the program.

Admission to the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Program

Admission to the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Program is competitive; therefore, meeting the following minimal requirements does not guarantee admission into the program.

1. Completion of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
2. Applicants are expected to have a minimum overall cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (based on a 4.0 scale) for their undergraduate degree and a cumulative GPA of 3.0 for prerequisite courses.
3. Completion of prerequisite courses (with a minimum grade of "C") prior to enrollment in the program.

Completion of all prerequisite courses is not required prior to applying to the program. You may have no more than 3 outstanding prerequisites at the time that you apply, and you must report a plan regarding when you will complete the remaining courses.

Prerequisite Course Credits

- PY 302: Abnormal Psychology (3)
- CH 101: Chemistry (4)
- ED299: Human Growth and Development (3)
- BI 241: Human Anatomy and Physiology I (4)
- BI 242: Human Anatomy and Physiology II (4)
- MA 147: Statistics (3)

4. Applicants need to have at least 30 documented OT observation hours under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist. As few as one occupational therapist (OTR) at one site and as many as two therapists at two different facilities can be used to complete the 30 hours. A Documentation of Experience (DOE) form will need to be completed by each supervising occupational therapist to verify contact hours. A total of 30 hours is required for admission; however, more hours are always desirable
5. Applicants must secure at least 2 professional references to complete an evaluation on their behalf.
6. Submission of an application through the Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service (OTCAS). <https://otcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>



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I. Mode of Delivery

Provide the planned delivery format(s) (*i.e.*, in-person, online, hybrid) of the program as defined in policy along with the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered (*i.e.*, on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s)). Please also note whether any program requirements can be completed through competency-based assessment.

The mode of delivery will be a hybrid format. Fieldwork requirements can be completed using competency-based assessment.

J. Projected Program Demand (Student Demand)

Briefly describe the primary method(s) used to determine the level of student demand for this program using evidence, such as enrollments in related coursework at the institution, or a survey of student interest conducted (indicate the survey instrument used), number and percentage of respondents, and summary of results.

The proposed OTM program will expand the ACONHP and UNA degree offerings. The need for the change was determined by requests from prospective students, local clinical partners, the UNA administration in collaboration with the Dean of the ACONHP, and the ACONHP faculty. Additionally, in February 2023, UNA surveyed all Freshmen and current nursing majors. A total of 431 responses were received (232 freshmen and 192 sophomores). Of those respondents, 371 (86.5%) expressed that they would be willing to attend graduate school for their chosen major. Based on the academic majors indicated by the students in the survey, 76.2% were in majors that could be a natural transition into a master's degree in OT. Specifically, 209 (48.72%) respondents identified as "health and medicine" majors, 64 (14.92%) "STEM" majors, and 54 (12.59%) "social science" majors. There were 381 (88.4) students who indicated that they have always been drawn to service-related professions. Additionally, 146 (66.20%) indicated that they did not know what an Occupational Therapist does. When presented with more of the profession of OT, 225 (52.33%) indicated they would be interested in the field. Of the 430 respondents, 58.37% (n=251) indicated yes or maybe when asked if they would have considered OT a major when they first enrolled.

K. Standard Occupational Code System

Using the federal Standard Occupational Code (SOC) System, indicate the top three occupational codes related to post-graduation employment from the program. A full list of SOCs can be found at <https://www.onetcodeconnector.org/find/family/title#17>.

A list of Alabama's In-Demand Occupations is available at <https://www.ache.edu/index.php/policy-guidance/>.

SOC 1 (required): 29-1122.00 Occupational Therapists

Briefly describe how the program fulfills a specific industry or employment need for the

State of Alabama. As appropriate, discuss alignment with Alabama's Statewide or Regional Lists of In-Demand Occupations (<https://www.ache.edu/index.php/policy-guidance/>) or with



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emerging industries as identified by [Innovate Alabama](#) or the [Economic Development Partnership of Alabama](#) (EDPA).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were approximately 47,000 OTA job openings in 2021, and the need for OTAs is expected to grow 25% by 2031 with a median salary of \$61,520 per year. Approximately 9,300 openings are expected annually from 2021-2031. Additionally, approximately 133,900 occupational therapist job vacancies were reported in 2021 with an anticipated 14% growth by 2031 and a reported median annual salary of \$85,570. An OT program would assist in meeting the demand for additional occupational therapists and also provide a pathway for OTAs to seek advanced degrees as occupational therapists. Locally, a gap in occupational therapy care has been identified among clinical partners due to a shortage of OTA professionals. The proposed OT program would help meet the employment needs of stakeholders within the community and expand the availability of occupational therapy services throughout the region.

III. Curriculum Information for Proposed Degree Program

A. Program Completion Requirements: Enter the credit hour value for all applicable components (enter N/A if not applicable).

Curriculum Overview of Proposed Program	
Credit hours required in general education	0
Credit hours required in program courses	67
Credit hours in program electives/concentrations/tracks	0
Credit hours in free electives	0
Credit hours in required research/thesis	0
Total Credit Hours Required for Completion	67

Note: The above credit hours **MUST** match the credit hours in the *Curriculum Components of Proposed Program* table in Section V.G.

B. Maximum number of credits that can be transferred in from another institution and applied to the program:

Maximum number of credits that can be transferred in from another institution and applied to the program is 6 (six) credits (2 courses) pending department chair/dean approval.

C. Intended program duration in semesters for full-time students: Six (6) semesters

D. Intended program duration in semesters for part-time students: There is no part-time option.

E. Does the program require students to demonstrate industry-validated skills, specifically through an embedded industry-recognized certification, structured [work-based learning](#) with an employer partner, or alignment with nationally recognized industry standards? Yes No

If yes, explain how these components fit with the required coursework.



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Students engage in work-based learning with an Occupational Therapist employed at a hospital, clinic, rehabilitation facility, etc., during fieldwork experiences. Completion of fieldwork is required in the following courses: Fieldwork Experience I A, Fieldwork Experience I B, Fieldwork Experience II A, and Fieldwork Experience II B. Fieldwork opportunities are required and embedded throughout the curriculum.

F. Does the program include any concentrations? Yes No

If yes, provide an overview and identify these courses in the *Electives/Concentrations/Tracks* section in the Curriculum Components of Proposed Program Table in Section V.G.

G. Please provide all course information as indicated in the following table. Indicate new courses with "Y" in the associated column. If the course includes a required work-based learning component, such as an internship or practicum course, please indicate with a "Y" in the WBL column.

Program Name:	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy			
Program Level:	Masters Level			
Curriculum Components of Proposed Program				
Course Number	Course Title	Credit Hours	New? (Y)	WBL? (Y)
<i>General Education Courses (Undergraduate Only)</i>				
Program Courses				
OT 500	Foundations and Framework for Advanced Occupational Therapy	3	Y	
OT 501	Occupational Performance across the Lifespan	3	Y	
OT 502	Advanced Clinical Pathophysiology for OT	3	Y	
OT 503	Advanced Human Anatomy and Kinesiology	4	Y	
OT 504	Neuroanatomy	3	Y	
OT 505	OT for Neurological Conditions	4	Y	
OT 506	Medical Documentation and Informatics	3	Y	
OT 507	Principles of Practice: Early Life	4	Y	
OT 508	Fieldwork Experience I A	1	Y	Y
OT 509	Occupational Measurement and Analysis	3	Y	
OT 510	OT for Mental Health Conditions	4	Y	
OT 511	Assistive Technology	2	Y	
OT 512	Fieldwork Experience I B	1	Y	Y
OT 600	OT for Orthopedic Conditions	3	Y	



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OT 601	Community-based and Specialized Practice	3	Y	
OT 602	OT with the Older Adult	4	Y	
OT 603	Management in OT	3	Y	
OT 604	Fieldwork Experience 1C	1	Y	Y
OT 605	Evidence-Based Practice	3	Y	
OT 606	Fieldwork Experience II A	6	Y	Y
OT 607	Fieldwork Experience II B	6	Y	Y
Program Electives/Concentrations/Tracks				
	None			
Research/Thesis				
	None			
*Total Credit Hours Required for Completion		67		

***Note:** The total credit hours should equal the total credit hours in the Curriculum Overview table (V.B, p. 9).



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Program Resource Requirements

A. Proposed Program Faculty*

Current Faculty and Faculty to Be Hired

Complete the following **New Academic Degree Proposal Faculty Roster** to provide a brief summary and qualifications of current faculty and potential new hires specific to the program.

***Note:** Institutions must maintain and have current as well as additional faculty curriculum vitae available upon ACHE request for as long as the program is active, but CVs are not to be submitted with this proposal.

Current Faculty			
1	2	3	4
CURRENT FACULTY NAME (FT, PT)	COURSES TAUGHT including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)
None			
Additional Faculty (To Be Hired)			
1	2	3	4
FACULTY POSITION (FT, PT)	COURSES TO BE TAUGHT including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)
FT	Fall, OT 500 Foundations and Framework for Advanced Occupational Therapy and 3 credit hours, G, Fall, Occupational Performance Across the Lifespan and 3 credit hours, G, Fall, Advanced Clinical Pathophysiology for OT and 3 credit hours, 4 credit hours, G, Fall	OTD	
PT	Fall, OT 601 Community-Based and Specialized Practice and 3 credit hours, G, Fall 2, OT 602 OT with Older Adult (with lab)	OTD	

Abbreviations: (FT, PT): Full-Time, Part-Time; (D, UN, UT, G, DU): Developmental, Undergraduate Nontransferable, Undergraduate Transferable, Graduate, Dual: High School Dual Enrollment
Course Modality: (IP, OL, HY, OCIS): In-Person, Online, Hybrid, Off-Campus Instructional Site
Courses Taught/To be Taught – For a substantive change prospectus/application, list the courses *to be taught*, not historical teaching assignments.



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B. All Proposed Program Personnel

Provide all personnel counts for the proposed program.

Employment Status of Program Personnel		Personnel Information		
		Count from Proposed Program Department	Count from Other Departments	Subtotal of Personnel
Current	Full-Time Faculty	0	0	0
	Part-Time Faculty	0	0	0
	Administration	0	1	1
	Support Staff	0	1	1
**New To Be Hired	Full-Time Faculty	1	0	1
	Part-Time Faculty	1	0	1
	Administration	0	0	0
	Support Staff	0	0	0
Personnel Total				4

****Note:** Any new funds designated for compensation costs (Faculty (FT/PT), Administration, and/or Support Staff to be Hired) **should be included** in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**. Current personnel salary/benefits (Faculty (FT/PT), Administration, and/or Support Staff) **should not be included** in the **Business Plan**.

Provide justification that the institution has proposed a sufficient number of faculty (full-time and part-time) for the proposed program to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review.

The University currently employs an Occupational Therapist who will serve as Program Director and full-time faculty. A fieldwork coordinator Occupational Therapist will begin full-time employment in Fall 2024. An adjunct faculty member will be hired after the launch of the program as needed pending enrollment.

C. Equipment

Will any special equipment be needed specifically for this program? Yes No
 If yes, list the special equipment. Special equipment cost should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

D. Facilities

Will any new facilities be required specifically for the program? Yes No
 If yes, list only **new** facilities. New facilities cost should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

Will any renovations to any existing infrastructure be required specifically for the program? Yes No



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If yes, list the renovations. Renovation costs should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file.**

University senior administrators have approved a plan to renovate Stevens Hall for current and future programs. The health professions programs, including Occupational Therapy, will occupy the first and second floors of Stevens Hall.

E. Assistantships/Fellowships

Will the institution offer any assistantships specifically for this program? Yes No

If yes, how many assistantships will be offered?

The expenses associated with any *new* assistantships should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file.**

F. Library

Provide a brief summarization (one to two paragraphs) describing the current status of the library collections supporting the proposed program.

Will additional library resources be required to support the program? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied, and include the cost in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file.**

UNA is served by one main campus library ([Collier Library](#)), which offers access to a variety of library instruction services and resources to members of the University community. These include opportunities to schedule a library instruction/information literacy session for any class taught at UNA, embedded/course librarians, and research consultations. Library instruction can be conducted either face-to-face or online, via Teams formats. The Embedded Librarian service offers professors teaching either online, or face-to-face courses with an online component, the opportunity to enlist the aid of a consulting librarian by adding them to the LMS (Canvas) course. Once "embedded," the librarian can interact directly with students via the course in the LMS (Canvas). Librarians answer research-related questions and post relevant information to class discussion boards to assist students in utilizing the library's resources. Canvas Modules on course specific library content, such as videos, can also be created and added to Canvas. Students may also schedule one-on-one research consultations/meetings with a librarian. Research Consultations are designed to facilitate individualized consultation with a librarian. Research consultations provide in-depth assistance in library research including identifying and locating relevant sources, search strategies, and evaluating information sources. Librarians help regarding the most appropriate resources for a subject area, locating periodical articles and books on a topic, searching the Web to find reliable sources, locating primary documents, locating, and using government documents and statistical resources, and using Interlibrary Loan to request materials from other libraries. These consultations can be scheduled by individuals or small groups and are held either in person in the Collier Library or online using Teams. There will be no off-campus or distance education instruction with this program. Modules regarding library resources may be added to each course. Additionally, embedded librarians are added to courses to provide student support and information regarding library resources. Educational Technology Services (ETS) provides online resources regarding the navigation



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of the learning management system, Microsoft office, and email. ETS also provides information regarding the online tutoring service, Tutor.com.

The library currently provides access to a variety of journals relevant to occupational therapy including, but not limited to *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, *Brazilian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Hong Kong Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Indian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Indian Journal of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy*, *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Mental Health Occupational Therapy*, *Occupational therapy in Mental Health*, *Occupational Therapy International*, *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics*, *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, and *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

G. Accreditation Expenses

Will the proposed program require accreditation expenses? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe the estimated cost and funding source(s) and include cost in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) requires the submission of accreditation fees that the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions will pay. Initial accreditation fees include a Candidacy Application Fee of \$3,670, a Pre-accreditation Review Fee of \$5,840, and an Initial On-Site Fee of \$5,840. Included in the "Other" section in the New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel spreadsheet.

H. Other Costs

Please explain any other costs to be incurred with program implementation, such as marketing or recruitment costs. Be sure to note these in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

The University of North Alabama will use organic marketing strategies (e.g., social media marketing, email campaigns, etc.) to recruit for the OTM program. Included in the "Other" section in the New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel spreadsheet.

I. Revenues for Program Support

Will the proposed program require budget reallocation? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied and include the revenue in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

Funds will be allocated from the University.

Will the proposed program require external funding (e.g., Perkins, Foundation, Federal Grants, Sponsored Research, etc.)? Yes No

If yes, list the sources of external funding and include the revenue in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.



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Please describe how you calculated the tuition revenue that appears in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**. Specifically, did you calculate using cost per credit hour or per term? Did you factor in differences between resident and non-resident tuition rates?

Tuition revenue was calculated using cost per credit hour. Tuition differences for residents and non-residents were included.

New Academic Degree Program Summary/Business Plan

Use the Excel form from ACHE's Academic Program webpage located at <https://www.ache.edu/index.php/forms/>, named **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan**, to complete the New Academic Program Degree Proposal.

Instructions and definitions are provided in the Excel file. **The New Academic Degree Program Business Plan should be uploaded as an Excel file (.xlsx) in the Academic Program Review (APR) Portal.**

Steps for Submitting the New Academic Degree Proposal

1. Complete the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document.
2. Attach the letters of support from external entities listed in *Section I.D.* at the end of the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document.
3. Save the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document as a **.pdf file**.
4. Complete the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan** and save as an **.xlsx file**.
5. Login to the Academic Program Review (APR) Portal at apr.ache.edu using your ACHE-provided login information. If you are not a designated user for your institution, contact your designated user.
6. Provide responses to questions in the APR Portal.
7. Upload the **New Academic Degree Proposal .pdf file** in the APR Portal.
8. Upload the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan .xlsx file** in the APR Portal.
9. Click to "Validate" the proposal and then address any issues with your submission.
10. Once validation is clear, click "Review" to check your responses before submitting. If all looks good, click "Submit" at the bottom of the review screen.
11. The system will then prompt you to "Lock" the submission. Your proposal is considered submitted only once it has been locked within the APR Portal.

ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUMMARY

INSTITUTION:	University of North Alabama		
PROGRAM NAME:	Master of Science in Occupational Therapy	CIP CODE:	51.2306
SELECT LEVEL:	GRADUATE (MASTER'S)		

ESTIMATED *NEW* EXPENSES TO IMPLEMENT PROPOSED PROGRAM

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	TOTAL
FACULTY	95,394	95,394	95,394	100,194	100,194	100,194	108,224	\$694,988
ADMINISTRATION/STAFF	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
EQUIPMENT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
FACILITIES	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
ASSISTANTSHIPS/FELLOWSHIPS	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
LIBRARY	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
ACCREDITATION AND OTHER COSTS	5,240	5,240	5,240	5,240	5,240	5,240	5,240	\$36,680
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$100,634	\$100,634	\$100,634	\$105,434	\$105,434	\$105,434	\$113,464	\$731,668

***NEW* REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM SUPPORT**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	TOTAL
REALLOCATIONS	14,009	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$14,009
EXTERNAL FUNDING	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TUITION + FEES	86,625	173,250	259,875	346,500	433,125	519,750	519,750	\$2,338,875
TOTAL REVENUES	\$100,634	\$173,250	\$259,875	\$346,500	\$433,125	\$519,750	\$519,750	\$2,352,884

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Note: "New Enrollment Headcount" is defined as unduplicated counts across years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	AVERAGE
FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT	No data reporting	10	15	20	25	30	30	21.67
PART-TIME ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT		0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
TOTAL ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT		10	15	20	25	30	30	21.67
NEW ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT		5	10	10	15	15	15	11.67
Validation of Enrollment			YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	

DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS

Note: Do not count Lead "0"s and Lead 0 years in computing the average annual degree completions.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	AVERAGE
DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS	No data reporting	5	5	10	10	15	15	10.00



North Alabama
SHOALS HOSPITAL

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to lend my support to the University of North Alabama in the development of an Occupational Therapy Assistant and Occupational Therapist program.

North Alabama Shoals Hospital has the area's only acute rehabilitation hospital, JW Sommer Rehabilitation Unit. Our acute inpatient rehabilitation unit serves the Alabama region and receives patients from Birmingham, AL to Nashville, TN. We offer 24-hour nursing care with daily physician rounding. We currently employ two Occupational Therapists who would be willing to provide clinical rotations for students to practice their skills to become OT Assistants and/or Occupational Therapist.

Our location is approximately six miles from the campus of the University of North Alabama which makes us a convenient location for clinicals. The nursing team and physicians currently provide education for nursing students and would be willing to expose support OT Assistants and Occupational Therapists in these clinical opportunities as well.

I hope that you will look favorably on this proposal to offer an Occupational Therapy Assistant and Occupational Therapist program at the University of North Alabama.

Sincerely,

Beth Loftin, MSN
Chief Nursing Officer
North Alabama Shoals Hospital

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the creation of a four-year Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at the University of North Alabama. Occupational therapists and OTAs are essential members of the healthcare team and promote the health and well-being of clients through assistance with activities of daily living. There is a growing need for occupational therapists across the country, and the Bureau of Labor and Statistics expects a 21% increase in the demand for occupational therapists by 2031.

Currently, there is a need for an occupational therapy program within Northwest Alabama. The only other OTA program within the state is over 80 miles away, and it is an associate's degree program. A bachelor OTA program at the University of North Alabama would aid in providing educational opportunities and meeting employer demands in north Alabama and throughout the state. An OTA program at UNA would increase the number of certified professionals, and provide a foundational education for professional growth within the field of occupational therapy.

There are currently 4 COTA vacancies and 3 OTR vacancies within my organization, and a program at UNA would assist with meeting the local demands for OT services. Additionally, my organization would be willing to serve as a clinical site to assist in the field training of students who may come through this program. I gladly extend my support for an OTA program at the University of North Alabama.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Paseur
OT program Coordinator
Huntsville Hospital



Stepping Stone Pediatric Therapy, Inc.

"Turning Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones"

405 East Dr. Hicks Blvd.

Florence, AL 35630

Phone: (256) 767-1576 Fax: (256) 767-1577

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in regards to the creation of the four year Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at the University of North Alabama. I am in full support of this program as Occupational Therapy is a growing field and a wonderful profession. Students should have access to attend an OT/OTA program without having to drive 80 plus miles away (closest OTA program in our area).

I am from North Louisiana and was able to attend an OTA program in my hometown. As I practiced as an OTA, I went on to further my education as an OT at the same college. Being an OTA opened my eyes to the need for therapy in a variety of settings. I love working with children and, as most people know, there is a rise in children diagnosed with Autism (ASD). Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapist Assistants play a vital role in helping these children, and many others, be as independent as possible at home, school and in their community. OTA's can work in a variety of settings that will continue to have growing needs, such as geriatrics, orthopedic, mental health, school systems etc.

As one of the owners of Stepping Stone Pediatric Therapy, we have welcomed and trained OTA's during their field work placements. We love to educate and watch the students grow in this amazing field. We look forward to being a training facility to these upcoming students. I strongly support the development of the OTA program at the University of North Alabama.

Sincerely,

Miranda Ainsworth, LOTR
Owner of Stepping Stone Pediatric Therapy, Inc.



Stepping Stone Pediatric Therapy, Inc.

"Turning Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones"

405 East Dr. Hicks Blvd.

Florence, AL 35630

Phone: (256) 767-1576 Fax: (256) 767-1577

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the creation of a four-year Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at the University of North Alabama. Occupational therapists and OTAs are an essential part of the pediatric therapy world. It is quite rewarding to get a child to work, thinking they are playing, in order to improve their life skills.

As we serve as an educational partner for the internship program for the Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science within the Kinesiology department at UNA, we could observe, educate and connect with so many students who are wanting to further their education in the field of OT. Any of these students wanting to obtain an OTA degree must travel 80 miles away for the only OTA program in the state to receive that further education. An OTA program at UNA would allow those students to stay in the Florence area allowing them to meet local, professional demands in the field of occupational therapy.

In addition to the internship program, we would be willing to serve as a clinical site for the students that come through the OTA program. I strongly support the development of the OTA program at the University of North Alabama.

Sincerely,


David Ainsworth 9/25/2023

CEO

Stepping Stone Pediatric Therapy, Inc.

09/15/2025

Re: Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support for the University of North Alabama's initiative to establish an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program. As the Human Resources Director at North Alabama Bone & Joint Clinic, I am aware of the growing demand for occupational therapy services in our region. I believe that establishing an OTA program is a crucial step in addressing this demand and providing valuable healthcare education to our community.

We have recently added a hand specialist physician to our clinic. This will generate a significant increase in patients requiring occupational therapy. It's highly possible that we will need to hire more OT providers to meet this demand. By offering an OTA program, the University of North Alabama would play a pivotal role in addressing this need, ensuring that patients in our local area have access to skilled occupational therapy services.

The establishment of an OTA program would not only benefit patients but also create valuable career opportunities for individuals aspiring to enter the healthcare field. Currently, the only OTA program in Alabama is an associate's program. Establishing a bachelor's degree program locally would ensure graduates will be well-equipped to provide essential care to patients with hand injuries and other conditions requiring occupational therapy, contributing to the growth of our local healthcare workforce. This initiative aligns with the evolving healthcare landscape in our community and reflects the university's commitment to meeting the educational needs of our region. I believe that this program will make a significant positive impact on the therapy community in our local area.

I am confident that the University of North Alabama's OTA program will be a valuable asset to our community, and I look forward to witnessing its success.

Sincerely,

Brittany Boyd, SHRM-CP
Human Resources Director
North Alabama Bone and Joint Clinic, P.C.
Rehab & Sports Medicine of the Shoals

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the creation of a four-year Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at the University of North Alabama. Occupational therapists and OTAs are essential members of our healthcare team within Genesis facilities and Powerback Rehab. These members promote the health and well-being of our patients and residents through assistance with activities of daily living. Occupational therapy is necessary for our short stay patients to recover and transition back to their home setting, while aiding our long-term residents to regain their prior function when indicated. There is a growing need for occupational therapists across the country, and the Bureau of Labor and Statistics expects a 21% increase in the demand for occupational therapists by 2031.

Currently, there is a need for an occupational therapy program within Northwest Alabama. The only other OTA program within the state is over 80 miles away, and it is an associate's degree program. A bachelor OTA program at the University of North Alabama would aid in providing educational opportunities and meeting employer demands in north Alabama and throughout the state. An OTA program at UNA would increase the number of certified professionals, and provide a foundational education for professional growth within the field of occupational therapy.

There are currently 2 COTA vacancies and 4 OT vacancies in Alabama within my organization, and a program at UNA would assist with meeting the local demands for OT services. Additionally, my organization would be willing to serve as a clinical site to assist in the field training of students who may come through this program. I extend my support for an OTA program at the University of North Alabama without hesitation.

Sincerely,
Candace Ivey
Director of Nursing
Cypress Cove Nursing and Rehab Center



October 25, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the creation of a four-year Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at the University of North Alabama (UNA). Occupational therapists and Occupational therapy assistants are essential members of the healthcare team and promote the health and well-being of clients through a focus on engagement in activities of daily living. Occupational therapy is a growing profession, with services expanding to serve numerous populations, assisting individuals in all walks of life to achieve their full potential.

Currently, there is only one OTA degree program in Alabama, which is an associate degree program over 80 miles away from UNA. A bachelor OTA program at the University of North Alabama would provide additional educational opportunities for individuals pursuing a career in the occupational therapy field. An OTA degree program at UNA would increase the number of certified professionals to help meet the growth in demand from employers in the field.

While there are currently no OTA or OTR vacancies at my facility, we are looking to grow our program as demand for occupational therapy services has increased over three fold since our program began two years ago. My facility would be willing to serve as a clinical site to assist in the field training of students who may come through this program. Perhaps we could grow our programs together, as we already have rotations of nursing students from UNA and find them to be exceptional students. As a UNA alumni and as a graduate of an OTA program, I gladly extend my support for an OTA program at the University of North Alabama.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meredith Madison-Simpson, LBSW, COTA/L".

Meredith Madison-Simpson, LBSW, COTA/L
Psychiatric Occupational Therapy Services Coordinator
Decatur Morgan Hospital – West Campus

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the creation of a four-year Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program at the University of North Alabama. Occupational therapists and OTAs are essential members of the healthcare team and promote the health and well-being of clients through assistance with activities of daily living. There is a growing need for occupational therapists across the country, and the Bureau of Labor and Statistics expects a 21% increase in the demand for occupational therapists by 2031.

Currently, there is a need for an occupational therapy program within Northwest Alabama. The only other OTA program within the state is over 80 miles away, and it is an associate's degree program. A bachelor OTA program at the University of North Alabama would aid in providing educational opportunities and meeting employer demands in north Alabama and throughout the state. An OTA program at UNA would increase the number of certified professionals, and provide a foundational education for professional growth within the field of occupational therapy.

There are currently 4 COTA vacancies and 3 OTR vacancies within my organization, and a program at UNA would assist with meeting the local demands for OT services. Additionally, my organization would be willing to serve as a clinical site to assist in the field training of students who may come through this program. I gladly extend my support for an OTA program at the University of North Alabama.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Paseur
OT program Coordinator
Huntsville Hospital

To whom it may concern:

I would like to give my support for a 4-year OTA program to be created at the University of North Alabama. As an LPTA with over 23 years of experience, I know the importance of a good education within the field of healthcare and being able to get that education close to home. I also fully support the assistant program moving into a Bachelor's versus Associate's degree.

I feel we need more occupational therapy programs in this area, especially to work with children with special needs in schools and outpatient clinics. The need for skilled intervention for Autism, Sensory Processing Disorders, Feeding and Behavior has risen greatly in the last few years, and we seem to have a deficit of OT's trained specifically in these areas. Having a program in this area would benefit the demand from employers as well as the needs of children in this area.

REACH Pediatrics Therapy Services remains dedicated to field training and will be glad to be a clinical site for students that come through this program. Once again, I fully extend my support for an OTA program at UNA.

Sincerely,

Marna Sneed, LPTA

Clinic Director

REACH Pediatrics Therapy Services

1615 Trojan Drive

Muscle Shoals, AL

256-314-5112



507 N. Hook Street, Tuscumbia, Alabama 35674
(256) 381-4310 Fax (256) 381-4378

September 12, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

United Cerebral Palsy of NW Alabama has enjoyed a wonderful partnership with the University of North Alabama and their College of Nursing and Health Professions for many years now. Their students have been very beneficial to our childcare program by providing annual Health Screenings and by volunteering at various times during the year.

Our organization currently contracts with two Occupational Therapists to provide free therapy to children who are developmentally disabled in northwest Alabama. We work closely with other health organizations in the area and we know that there is definitely a shortage of OTs and COTAs in Alabama. We've been contacted more than once over the past few years by other agencies looking to 'borrow' our Occupational Therapists to help meet the needs of their clients.

UCP of NWA would very much support the creation of an Occupational Therapy Assistant program at the University of North Alabama. We believe this program would definitely meet a need here in Alabama.

Sincerely,

Alison Isbell

Alison Isbell
Executive Director

To whom it may concern,

9/20/23

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed OTA bachelor program at UNA. There is a need for an OTA school closer to the area to prevent traveling for hours daily or even having to relocate to a different area. There is a need for a bachelors program to increase education in the field of OT and to even then further education to Masters level and become registered therapist. I look forward to having students in clinical rotations at our facility.

Thank you,

Dorinda Putman, COTA/L, Therapy coordinator



Office of the Provost and
Vice President for ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

April 3, 2024

Dr. Robin McGill
Deputy Director of Academic Affairs
Alabama Commission on Higher Education
100 N. Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-2000

Dear Dr. McGill,

The University of North Alabama (UNA) respectfully submits for review a new program proposal for the following Master of Science degree to be offered in the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions (ACONHP):

Master of Science in Occupational Therapy, CIP Code: 51.2306

The proposed Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program (MSOT) is intended to provide graduate-level preparation to advance the professional opportunities of baccalaureate students seeking employment in the occupational therapy profession. The goal of the proposed MSOT program is to graduate individuals who can provide an advanced level of care, possess a higher level of knowledge in the occupational therapy (OT) profession, and are prepared to administer compassionate, person-centered care for clients across the lifespan.

This new program will be offered in a hybrid format, with approximately 80% of the curriculum offered face-to-face and 20% online. Fieldwork requirements will be completed throughout the program.

ACONHP will seek accreditation for this new program through the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) to ensure it meets the standards necessary to prepare students for credentialing and employment. ACOTE accreditation is required for students to be eligible for the National Board Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification examination.

UNA is excited about the potential of this new program, which has been requested by key stakeholders and will address the needs of a high-demand field in the state of Alabama. Currently, the closest university offering this program is more than 200 miles away. This program has been requested by prospective students, local clinical partners, the UNA administration in collaboration with the Dean of the ACONHP, and the ACONHP faculty.

UNA Box 5041, One Harrison Plaza, Florence, AL 35632-0001 | P: 256.765.4258 | F: 256.765.4632 |
una.edu/academics

Equal Opportunity / Equal Access Institution

We have included in our program proposal letters of support for this MS in Occupational Therapy from the following stakeholders:

1. North Alabama Medical Center
2. Helen Keller Hospital
3. JW Sommers Rehabilitation Facility
4. Stepping Stones Pediatric Therapy, Inc.
5. North Alabama Bone and Joint Rehabilitation
6. Cypress Cove Nursing and Rehabilitation Facility
7. Decatur Morgan Hospital – West Campus
8. Huntsville Hospital
9. Easter Seals/ Reach Pediatrics
10. United Cerebral Palsy of NW Alabama
11. Mitchell Hollingsworth Nursing and Rehabilitation Center

Please let me know if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Katie C. Kinney, Ph.D.
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs