

# Review of Youngstown State University Master of Athletic Training Proposal

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## **Executive Summary**

Youngstown State University proposes the creation of a new Master of Athletic Training degree that would prepare graduates for the national Athletic Training board exam and state licensure eligibility. The proposed degree is appropriate in content, duration and sequence; is consistent with current external accreditation requirements; is academically housed in an appropriate college; and appears to meet minimal staffing requirements. YSU has been responsive to most previously identified concerns regarding the proposal; however their estimates for expected enrollment/revenue and explanation of relative demand remain very optimistic. There is also a concern about potentially using program students to contain costs in patient care services for student-athletes that would be prohibited under accreditation standards. Overall, we do not oppose the proposed program, but we suggest the decision should take into account whether the program would be viable with a smaller enrollment and that the role of students needs to be clarified.

## **Responsiveness to concerns previously identified**

Youngstown State University has been responsive to previously identified concerns with nearly all concerns addressed. The director of the proposed program has engaged in discussion with us regarding the initial concerns and the updated proposal reflects those conversations. They better describe the program's purpose and content, how it will meet accreditation requirements regarding staffing and facilities, and how it fits within the state system. Overall, the proposal is much improved, yet there are still significant areas of concern.

## **Ongoing Concerns**

The areas where previously identified concerns remain are as follows:

1. Evidence of Need (section 4 of the proposal):
  - a. The justification for need in the state correctly points out that Ohio currently has 26 accredited Athletic Training professional degree programs. However the proposal optimistically suggests that YSU proposed program will help to meet statewide need. The proposal does not provide the context that Ohio already has more programs than any other state. It also does not point out that most of the State's existing programs are not at maximum capacity. There is likely sufficient overall capacity within the existing programs in the state to meet the demand.

- b. The proposal attempts to make a case for an unmet regional need and suggests that there are no other state programs close enough to YSU to meet that regional need. The proposal is silent about whether the program at Kent State University, 42 miles away, would impact the regional need in Northeast Ohio.
- c. The proposal implies novelty in the YSU program would be one of the few with both a professional (entry-level) Athletic Training Program and CAATE Accreditation. This is perhaps overstating the point because ALL entry-level Athletic Training programs MUST be CAATE accredited and they ALL will need to move to offering a master's degree within the next 7 years. At best, the novelty of the proposed program will be short lived.

## 2. Prospective Enrollment

- a. The proposal suggests enrollment of 18-22 students per cohort. For comparison, the program at Ohio State has been the largest program in the state over the past 3 year cycle, averaging 18 graduates per year. The state-wide average is 9.2 graduates per year over the past 3 years. Their closest program (Kent State) averages 10.3 graduates per year. No rationale as to support that that YSU will be able to meet their enrollment projection is provided and their estimate seems overly optimistic.

## 3. Revenue

- a. Their proposed revenue is based on a very ambitious enrollment projection without much data to support it. They may struggle to meet these projections.

## 4. Curriculum

- a. Biology is still not a required course. It was announced at the Athletic Training Accreditation Conference in October that it is likely to become a required scientific foundation course for all Athletic Training programs in the next couple years. This is a minor concern at best and can be easily addressed if biology becomes required by the accreditor.

A new concern is found on page 9 where the relationship between the academic program and the athletics program is described. It reads, **“Their [Athletics’] need for athletic training students increases every year. This mutually beneficial collaboration will help athletics and the increasing costs of providing each team with the desperately needed assistance via student assistance.”**

- 5. The statement appears to imply the use of students to meet patient care demands in athletics and that doing so will help control costs for that care. If that is indeed the

intent, then it would be inappropriate. The accreditation standards expressly prohibit the use of students as replacements for an adequate staff of licensed Athletic Trainers.

- a. A relationship between an academic degree program in Athletic Training and the Athletics programs of the University will undoubtedly be beneficial because it ties the academic and athletic missions together in a single program. Couching the benefit in terms of containing costs for meeting staffing needs would be inappropriate and the use of students as replacements for qualified staff would be prohibited under accreditation guidelines. The reality is that it is typically more expensive to offer a program than it would be to simply hire more patient care staff.

### **Whether or Not to Support this proposal**

Concerns remain regarding the need, projected enrollment/revenue, and role of students relative to staffing needs in athletics. The Athletic Training program at Ohio State does not oppose the creation of the proposed program at Youngstown State and does not anticipate being impacted by its creation. However we caution that 1.) the final decision should take into account whether the program would be viable with a smaller enrollment than the proposal projects, and 2.) that the role of program students relative to containing costs in providing patient care to student-athletes should be re-considered.