

**Academic Audit Final Report**  
**University of Tennessee at Chattanooga**  
**Health and Human Performance**

**Undergraduate Programs**

**BS in Health and Human Performance: Exercise Science**  
**BS in Health and Human Performance: Sport and Leisure Services Administration**  
**BS in Health and Human Performance: Health Education/Physical Education K-12**

**Graduate Program**

**MS in Health and Human Performance: Physical Activity and Health**

**Academic Audit Team Members**

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**Bradford Strand, North Dakota State University**  
**Dominic Tharpe, Motlow State community College**

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## Introduction

The Health and Human Performance Department (HHP) at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) is a large department that serves about 1,000 students in four undergraduate programs, three of which were included in the Academic Audit review process:

- Exercise Science (ES) (approximately 650 students)
- Sport and Leisure Services Administration (SLSA) (approximately 135 students)
- Health Education/Physical Education K-12 (HPE) (approximately 55 students)

The department also has two graduate programs, one of which is included in the Academic Audit review process, the MS in Physical Activity and Health (PAH), which was initiated in 2014, currently has 10 students, and has no graduates to date.

On April 4-5, 2016, the department and campus were visited by the Academic Audit teams consisting of three members: Norma Hogan, Professor Emerita of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University (team chair); Bradford Strand, Professor and Program Coordinator, Health Education and Physical Education, North Dakota State University, and Dominic Tharpe, Transfer/Student Success Specialist, Motlow State Community College. Prior to the visit, the team reviewed the self-study, communicated by email and telephone, and developed preliminary sets of questions and observations. On site the team met with multiple groups of participants and stakeholders—administrators, faculty, students, and stakeholders.

Specifically, the Academic Audit team met with the following groups:

- Faculty: Nine faculty members, including representatives from all the concentrations under review and both undergraduate and graduate faculty members.
- Students: Seven undergraduate students, including representatives of all the concentrations, and one graduate student. (A number of graduate students were not available on the day of the Audit Team's visit.)
- Stakeholders and others: Academic Advisor, Internship Coordinator, four individuals who have served as mentors for internships.

The Academic Audit Team was very pleased with the thorough, orderly arrangements for the visit, which was both informative and pleasant and the quality of information from the groups and individuals interviewed.

At the exit interview, the team members presented their summary reports for the undergraduate and graduate programs, including Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations, and left copies with administrators. The team also completed the undergraduate and graduate rubrics for the THEC Quality Assurance Funding requirements.

After the visit, the Academic Audit Team drafted sections of the report, which were compiled by the team leader; and the preliminary draft was sent to the team members. The final draft was submitted to TBR for distribution to UTC/HHP administration and program faculty.

### **Overall Performance and Quality Assurance**

The programs in Health and Human Performance have not participated previously in the Academic Audit process. Although the Academic Audit Team made recommendations for improvement and affirmed the faculty members' identified initiatives for improvement (pp. 20-21 of self-study), there were no concerns about overall performance and quality assurance for the undergraduate or graduate programs.

According to the self-study, the department has 18 full-time faculty and approximately 1000 students, with approximately 650 of those students in Exercise Science. Discussion with faculty and the department chair indicated that the department filled one new tenure-track position last year in Sport and Leisure Science and that the Provost has approved three additional faculty lines in Exercise Science for fall 2016. Faculty discussed enrollment, retention, and attrition patterns for the three undergraduate concentrations and how they handle advising and scheduling.

At present, the graduate program has only ten students and will have its first completers this spring. At present, faculty did not see the graduate program as a problem for their workloads. Pending system- and state-level administrative approvals, the department intends to transition the MS in Health and Human Performance: Physical Activity and Health to the Masters of Public Health, and the department chair and graduate faculty discussed their planning processes, including identification of resources and hiring faculty with appropriate credentials for the future. The target date for the MPH is fall 2017, with an alternative date of fall 2018.

Faculty and students indicated that their space, facilities, and equipment are suitable and more than adequate. Exercise Science could use more classroom space; however, the recent implementation of a cohort structure has greatly improved scheduling for students (Commendation # 4 and Affirmation # 2). Other resources include a Professional Advisor who advises students in Exercise Science in their sophomore year and helps with Sport and Leisure Services Administration students as needed (Commendation #4). Students transition to faculty advisors in their junior year. Undergraduate students thought that advising provided in their department beginning in the sophomore year is very good, but were unanimous that the advising provided by the university during the freshman year is not satisfactory and cited multiple instances of confusion and/or misadvising. Although this issue is external to the HHP Department, faculty may want to explore solutions/interventions to support their students.

### **Performance in the Focal Areas**

#### **Focal Area 1: Learning Outcomes**

The data in the self-study for this focal area include student demographics, program curriculum maps, HHP learning outcomes, and enrolled student survey. Appendix A of the Self-study provided a list of three to five broad learning outcomes for each of the three undergraduate programs and for the graduate program. Examples include “discuss major public health issues” and “demonstrate professionalism in all field work.” Appendix C provided an example of a Curriculum Map for Sport and Leisure Services Administration and additional curriculum maps for the undergraduate programs were available on the department website. In some instances the outcomes shown in Appendix A did not contain all the outcomes shown on the curriculum maps and/or the statements in Appendix A were more general.

The self-study stated (and faculty confirmed) that they have collaborated to develop learning outcomes that are assessed in their courses and that curricular issues are discussed with input from all program faculty. Further, the self-study indicated that learning outcomes (Appendix A) are based on national standards when possible (e.g., physical education). As noted in the self-study (p. 5), the processes for developing learning outcomes have not routinely involved input from stakeholders, graduates, or other advisory groups. The self-study also stated that “there has not been a clear mechanism for communicating the Learning Outcomes to various constituents, including HHP students (p. 5).” These statements were supported by interviews with students and stakeholders.

Faculty have identified as an improvement initiative developing “academic advisory boards” for each program. The Academic Audit Team strongly affirmed this improvement initiative (Affirmation #3) and believe that external advisory board members can provide valuable insight related to current practice in the field. The addition of professionals in this process would facilitate further partnership development and, in the case of HPE, future provision for K-12 in-service staff development. The external stakeholders interviewed by the Academic Audit Team all indicated that they would like to be engaged on advisory boards, and these individuals had specific ideas for improving the course offerings, field experiences, and internships, based on their experiences with students.

The Academic Audit Team recognizes the importance of student learning outcomes for both the undergraduate and graduate programs and recommended that the various programs develop a more formal process for identifying a comprehensive set of student learning outcomes, communicating the student learning outcomes to students, assessing the student learning outcomes, and using the assessment data for program improvement (Recommendation #2). By doing so, faculty will close the assessment loop while continually striving to better understand what students know and are able to do.

## **Focal Area 2: Curriculum and Co-Curriculum**

As reported in the previous section, broad learning outcomes have been identified for each program and curriculum maps have been designed for each undergraduate program. The self-study stated that faculty worked together in developing the outcomes and maps, that faculty

review program curriculum annually, and that each HHP unit integrates out-of-class experiences into their outcomes. Input from the proposed advisory boards will strengthen the curriculum and identify curriculum strengths and weaknesses as faculty get feedback from practitioners.

Faculty collaborate on curriculum design and program improvement beyond what is required by the university. For example, although not a university requirement regarding curriculum changes, all HHP faculty discuss proposed curriculum changes prior to moving changes forward in the university's system for approval.

The self-study noted that results from the NSSE Enrolled Student Survey call into question the amount of student involvement with faculty other than coursework. Although results indicated that a lesser percentage of HHP students, compared to University and College students, interacted with faculty about career plans or coursework or talked with faculty outside of class, the quality of interactions with faculty were rated higher for HHP compared to the College and University. Conversations with students indicated that faculty were very receptive to advising and helping students; something the faculty also said they do on a regular basis.

Two improvement initiatives identified in the self-study to increase student contact with faculty are to employ an internship/practicum coordinator who will work with each program and that faculty will create pages on ScholarBridge (p. 8 of self-study). An internship/practicum coordinator is currently in place within the Exercise Science major and has become active in helping students seek internships. Creating individual ScholarBridge pages will certainly connect faculty with undergraduate and graduate students interested in conducting research as individual ScholarBridge pages will identify specific research interests of faculty that may be of interest to students (Affirmation #5). The Academic Audit Team affirmed the departmental goal to increase out-of-class experiences, with an initial performance indicator of 50% and the final target of 100% of HPP graduates having an out-of-classroom experience (Affirmation #1).

The MS in Health and Human Performance: Physical Activity and Health is a relatively new program, having been in existence for two years. This degree evolved by merging two previously under-enrolled MS concentrations and has been designed to better fit the current marketplace and to serve as a transition into the proposed MPH program. The two-year cohort program currently enrolls 10 graduate students who have two options (thesis or research project) for their culminating experience. The graduate student who was able to meet with the team provided examples to confirm that the curriculum for this program is more rigorous and individualized in nature relative to the undergraduate programs.

Based on conversations with faculty about the culminating experience (thesis or applied capstone project plus internship), the Academic Audit Team recommended that faculty in the MS HHP: PAH program clarify the relationship between students' career goals (e.g., doctoral study, specific career entry, etc.) to the desirability of completing either the formal thesis or the project (Graduate Program, Recommendation #1). The graduate student provided thorough

information about his program of studies and capstone project. The project was clearly meaningful and challenging; it had received IRB approval, and the graduate student had begun making presentations about the results to appropriate groups.

### **Focal Area 3: Teaching and Learning Processes**

The HHP programs do not use many adjunct faculty; graduate assistants are used primarily for grading and assisting with research and usually do not teach. Faculty are well-qualified and, as noted previously, three new faculty will begin in fall 2016.

Students reported that, with very few exceptions, their instruction in their major courses had been excellent and, as noted previously, that they received high quality advising in the majors. They noted that advisors were available and persistent in helping students move forward. Students noted some confusion about prerequisite courses that should have been cleared up at the freshman level when they were being advised outside the HHP department. They cited their preparation in research as a strength of their programs and stated that facilities and equipment for teaching and learning were adequate or better. Undergraduates preparing for advanced professional degrees thought they had been well prepared for graduate study.

When asked for ideas about program improvements, the undergraduates in all three programs cited the need for more and/or better practical (“real”) experiences. The Health and Physical Education student thought his program needed more experience with individuals with disabilities. Students in Exercise Science wanted more involvement with professional, sports, and other appropriate organizations in a wider region. Those in Sport and Leisure Services Administration and Exercise Science wanted experiences in settings more closely related to their career goals and to jobs they were likely to find. The Academic Audit Team identified field experiences and internships as an area needing attention (Recommendation #1) and suggest that faculty obtain more systematic and thorough input from students and mentors to improve these experiences. This recommendation is consistent with the faculty’s self-identified improvement initiative to increase out-of-class experiences (Affirmation #1) and the recent hiring of an Internship Coordinator (Commendation #4).

Faculty have identified several other improvement initiatives that relate to teaching and learning processes: implementing formal prerequisite feedback, instituting mid-term course reviews, and external peer observation and evaluation of classroom teaching. The Academic Audit Team affirmed these positive initiatives (Affirmation #4).

#### **Focal Area 4: Student Learning Assessment**

For the most part, the assessment data presented in the self-study did not address the direct assessment of student learning outcomes specific to the undergraduate and graduate programs. The statements of assessments on the curriculum maps for the three undergraduate programs were very general, for example, “assignments,” “quizzes,” “professional service.” In addition, there was little evidence in the report or in interviews that faculty had systematically collected and used assessment data for program improvement. Faculty did cite some changes based on observation. For example, faculty in Sport and Leisure Services Administration stated that they had added an elementary education experience for environmental education because peer teaching proved unsatisfactory.

Appendix E provided “Test Results for HPE students taking the PRAXIS II.” The data indicate that HPE students score at or somewhat above state and national averages and, overall, do well. However, no clear evidence was found that results had been analyzed and used for improvement.

The data on grade distributions in three core classes (pp. 12-13) for Sports and Leisure Services Administration and for Health and Physical Education reflect *student success* but not *student learning outcomes*.

The use of alumni/graduate, employee, and student surveys certainly provides valuable data in assessing programs. It appears that the faculty have adequately analyzed the various survey results and determined program strengths and weaknesses in relation to those sources of information. An alumni/graduate survey can provide valuable information if the questions asked pertain to a specific program and results represent the graduates from that program. The alumni/graduate survey results in this self-study do not speak so much to the department and its programs as to the graduate’s overall experience at UTC. For example, one question asks, “Since graduating from UTC, how many activities sponsored by the UTC Office of Alumni Affairs or other UTC departments have you participated in?” No matter how a graduate answers this question, it has little to do with the department’s programs. If done properly, an alumni survey could provide valuable information as to how graduates view the program and can certainly help one better understand program weaknesses that need to be addressed.

The employer survey (p. 7 of self-study) does provide information specific to HHP compared to all UTC programs. In all but one of the eight characteristics, HHP students received higher mean ratings than did others UTC students. This suggests that HHP students are well prepared for their professional work. With the exception of “written communication skills,” the “Eight Selected Characteristics of UTC Grads” were not directly related to the HHP Learning Outcomes (p. 22 of self-study) but did address valuable program outcomes. The Academic Audit Team also suggests that an exit survey of all graduating students could provide valuable insight into current programs.

Interviews with undergraduate students and with mentors for field experiences/internships indicated that field experiences/internships for Exercise Science and Sport and Leisure Services Administration are an area in particular need of review, specifically in terms of clarifying expectations and learning outcomes, assessing student performance, and using assessments and mentor input for improvement. The Academic Audit Team recommended that faculty in these two programs evaluate their current field and internship experiences, including communicating expectations to students and mentors, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of student performance during field experience/internship, and using evaluation results for program improvement (Recommendation #1).

### **Graduate Focal Area 5: Research Environment**

The Departmental web page (<https://www.utc.edu/health-human-performance/faculty-accomplishments.php>) reports a considerable amount of accomplishments for HHP faculty in the previous year, including college awards for service and outreach, research and scholarship, and teaching and advising; UTC grants for scholarly activities and other recognitions; data-based research publications in refereed national/international journals; book chapters; invited and peer-reviewed presentations to appropriate national/international peer and professional groups.

Faculty stated that doing research is “a challenge,” particularly with the standard course load of 4+4. However, they reported that released time is provided for grants, scholarship activities, and large classes. As noted previously, faculty did not regard graduate classes as a burden.

The department allocates money for supporting research and supplies, paying student research assistants, and funding travel and publications related to research. Faculty also involve students in research and have found that students enjoy the experiences. Faculty also stated that they had a clear understanding of the university and departmental expectations for research. HHP faculty collectively appear to be productive and to manage within the resources available to them to maintain an adequate or better level of scholarly activity. In addition, there are sufficient numbers of well-qualified faculty to support a masters-level program.

### **Undergraduate Focal Area 6/Graduate focal Area 7: Academic Audit Process**

The process of completing the self-study was collaborative and reasonably participatory for a large department, and the sections of the self-study were generally complete and pertinent. As noted in the self-study, the Academic Audit Process led faculty to identify five substantial initiatives for improvement (p. 20 of self-study).

Volunteers, including one from each of the academic programs under review, composed the self-study committee. All other HHP faculty and staff contributed at various points in the process. Different faculty members drafted the sections and were responsible for gathering the relevant information. The Department Head then drafted the final version. The chair stated that he did not circulate the final draft for review, possibly contrary to the statement on page 2 of



the self-study; however, faculty indicated that they felt that the self-study process was participatory and that the self-study committee had systematically obtained input from colleagues. Faculty stated that they have discussed the identified improvement initiatives and have had committees related to them.

There was no indication of participation from students or stakeholders in the self-study process. The group of internship mentors indicated that they had participated in a past session to provide input for the department's programs but did not know what was done with their ideas.

## **Conclusions**

The Audit Team concluded the site visit by making the following Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations during the exit session:

### **Undergraduate Programs**

#### **Commendations**

Commendation #1 – The Academic Audit Team commends the quality of curriculum and instruction in the undergraduate programs, as reflected in student evaluations of instruction, interviews with students and stakeholders, alumni surveys, and departmental emphasis on reflective teaching.

Commendation #2 – The Academic Audit Team commends the processes of communication and collaboration within the department and within programs.

Commendation #3 – The Academic Audit Team commends the planning for expanding online courses and for obtaining Quality Matters training.

Commendation #4 – The Academic Audit Team commends the effective use of a Professional Advisor, hiring an Internship Coordinator, and implementation of a cohort format in Exercise Science.

Commendation #5 – The Academic Audit Team commends the recent hiring of four new faculty to support the programs in Exercise Science and Sport and Leisure Services Administration.

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#### **Affirmations**

Affirmation #1 – The Academic Audit Team affirms the departmental goal of 100% of HHP graduates having an out-of-classroom experience.

Affirmation #2 – The Academic Audit Team affirms the recent improvements in scheduling for Exercise Science classes.

Affirmation #3 – The Academic Audit Team affirms the identified improvement initiative of having an active academic advisory board for each program and using their input for program improvement.

Affirmation #4 – The Academic Audit Team affirms the identified improvement initiatives to establish a regular process for formal pre-requisite feedback, institute required mid-term course reviews, and establish processes for external peer review of teaching.

Affirmation #5 – The Academic Audit Team affirms faculty use of Scholar Bridge to increase student-faculty communication.

**Recommendations**

Recommendation #1 – The Academic Audit Team recommends that the faculty in Exercise Science and Sport and Leisure Services Administration evaluate their current field and internship experiences and implement better defined and structured experiences/internships, including communicating expectations to students and mentors, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of student performance during field experience/internship, and using evaluation results for program improvement.

Recommendation #2 – The Academic Audit Team recommends that faculty in all undergraduate HHP programs develop and implement a more formal process for identifying a comprehensive set of student learning outcomes (SLO’s), communicating SLO’s to students, assessing SLO’s, and using assessment data for program improvement; where possible, faculty should use appropriate national professional standards to inform their identified SLO’s.

**Graduate Program**

**Commendations**

Commendation #1 – The Academic Audit Team commends the development of the MS in Physical Activity and Health and the planning to transition to a Masters of Public Health.

Commendation #2 – The Academic Audit Team commends the hiring of new faculty to support the MS: PAH.

Commendation #3 – The Academic Audit Team commends the incorporation of practical, hands-on research and research-related experiences in the MS: PAH

Commendation #4 – The Academic Audit Team commends providing increasing numbers of students with opportunities to present research and participate in professional conferences.

**Affirmations**

Affirmation #1 – The Academic Audit Team affirms the more rigorous and more individualized nature of the graduate program, relative to undergraduate studies.

Affirmation #2 – The Academic Audit Team affirms that the graduate faculty overall displays the appropriate level of scholarly productivity and professional involvement to support a masters-level program.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendation #1 – The Academic Audit Team recommends that faculty in the MS: PAH program develop and implement a more formal process for identifying a comprehensive set of student learning outcomes (SLO's), communicating SLO's to students, assessing SLO's, and using assessment data for program improvement; where possible, faculty should use appropriate national professional standards to inform their identified SLO's.

Recommendation #2 – The Academic Audit Team recommends that faculty in the MS: PAH program clarify the relationship between student career goals and the desirability of completing either a thesis or a research project.

Recommendation #3 – The Academic Audit Team recommends that faculty and administration continue to monitor this new program and evaluate its future as it either transitions into the MPH or continues as it is.