



ROBERT M. SMITH  
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BILL LEE  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION**  
**STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION**  
312 ROSA L. PARKS AVENUE, 9<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243  
(615) 741-3605

TO: Mark Byrnes, University Provost  
Middle Tennessee State University

FROM: Julie A. Roberts, Chief Academic Officer  
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

SUBJECT: Middle Tennessee State University  
Letter of Notification: Project Management, Master of Science

DATE: August 3, 2023

Thank you for the submission of the Letter of Notification (LON) for the Master of Science in Project Management (MSPM). Per THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process, the LON is evaluated on the following criteria: alignment with state master plan and institutional mission; feasibility; institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program; and program costs and revenues.

After reviewing the submitted LON, I approve Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) plan to develop the New Academic Program Proposal (NAPP) for the Project Management, MSPM. As MTSU continues to develop the proposed program, all concerns italicized on the attached LON evaluation must be reflected in the NAPP. It is understood the proposed program will be developed in accordance with the mission of MTSU and will meet the Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education 2015-2025 degree completion and workforce development objectives.

Attachment

cc: Sidney A. McPhee, MTSU, President  
Robert M. Smith, THEC, Interim Executive Director  
Amy Aldridge Sanford, MTSU, Vice Provost of Academic Programs  
Anjelica Jones, THEC, Director of Academic Affairs

**Tennessee Higher Education Commission**  
**Letter of Notification Evaluation**  
**August 3, 2023**



The evaluation of the Letter of Notification (LON) is in accordance with the THEC Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process. The evaluation is conducted by interested parties and THEC staff. The LON is posted on the THEC website for a 15-day period of comment by interested parties. Based on the internal and external evaluation, THEC will make a determination to support, not to support, or defer a decision based on a revised LON.

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| <b>Institution:</b> Middle Tennessee State University   | <b>LON Submission Date:</b> June 19, 2023 |
| <b>Academic Program, Degree Designation:</b> Project Management, MSPM   |   |
| <b>Concentration(s):</b> N/A  |   |
| <b>Proposed CIP Code and Title:</b> 52.0211 Project Management  |   |
| <b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b> May 2024   |   |
| <b>Time Period Posted on Website for Public Comment:</b> June 20-July 20, 2023  |   |
| <b>Academic Program Liaison(s):</b>   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amy Aldridge Sanford, PhD, Vice Provost for Academic Programs, <a href="mailto:amy.aldridge.sanford@mtsu.edu">amy.aldridge.sanford@mtsu.edu</a></li> <li>▪ Richard Tarpey, DBA, Assistant Professor of Management, <a href="mailto:rtarpey@mtsu.edu">rtarpey@mtsu.edu</a></li> </ul> |   |

**Note: Comments in italics within this document should be addressed in the NAPP.**

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| <b>Overall Comments</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Is the degree designation MS or MSPM?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Will the PMI certification be a required component of the degree program? If not, please include specific information regarding the value of the degree itself, especially if a student does not gain PMI certification.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Letter of support from President/Chancellor</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A letter of support date June 14, 2023, sent from MTSU President McPhee was included.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Section II: Background</b>                      |  |
| <b>Background on academic program development</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The motivation to create a Master of Science in Project Management (MSPM) program at MTSU emerged from identified industry and professional needs, with limited opportunities, for knowledgeable and skilled project managers in Tennessee.</li> <li>▪ The proposed program will be targeted to newly graduated undergraduates without professional experience, and professionals engaged in managing complex projects and project life cycles in all industry sectors facing rapidly changing environments.</li> <li>▪ Creating a dedicated MSPM in Project Management will allow students to develop hard and soft skills, knowledge, and abilities,</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>as well as sophisticated technological tools and techniques, to meet project requirements and lead teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students will acquire practical skills and theoretical knowledge through case studies, simulations, and practitioner-partnered projects.</li> <li>▪ The program leadership will maintain a conduit between faculty, businesses, alumni, the Project Management Institute (hereafter, PMI), and other stakeholders to keep the interdisciplinary curriculum current and aligned with industry standards and needs.</li> <li>▪ The proposed program will prepare students for the PMI certification.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Purpose and nature of academic program</b></p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The 30-credit hour proposed program will be offered in an online format to provide maximum flexibility for full-time professionals seeking to improve their existing or develop new skills toward their professional career development.</li> <li>▪ Courses will be offered in the Jones College of Business (Departments of Management and Information Systems &amp; Analytics) and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (Engineering Technology and Concrete Industry Management) to expose students to multiple methodologies.</li> <li>▪ The targeted populations include recent college graduates of all majors and experienced working professionals who desire to gain or advance project management positions. Students will not need project management experience to apply and be accepted.</li> <li>▪ The proposed program will seek to meet industry demand, diversify MTSU's program offerings, offer an interdisciplinary approach to project management, provide professional development, and contribute research and innovation to the field.</li> <li>▪ From the student perspective, the proposed program can offer career advancement, an in-demand skillset, training for complex projects, leadership and communication skills, and an industry-recognized certification.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed program aligns with the Tennessee State Master Plan for Postsecondary Education in several ways, including developing foundational skills for the new digital economy, and providing stackable credentials.</li> <li>▪ The proposed program aims to develop highly sought-after behavioral skills in students to become successful in project management and extend to other areas of leadership which aligns with the Tennessee Master Plan for Higher Education as a high demand foundational skill.</li> <li>▪ MTSU also identifies five foundational skills within the THEC Master Plan that students will gain a working knowledge of during their matriculation through the proposed program including communication, analytical skills, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.</li> </ul>  |

|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed program will support MTSU's mission by supporting student learning through effective teaching methods, emerging technologies, experiential and integrative learning, research, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>   |                      |                      |                      |                                |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |
|--|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|---------|---------------|---|---|---|-----------------|
| <p><b>Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program</b></p>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The faculty from the departments of Management, Information Systems &amp; Analytics; Concrete Industry Management; and Engineering will teach the courses in the proposed program.</li> <li>The current support staff of the Jones College of Business will support the proposed program without undue strain on the current resources.</li> <li>The proposed curriculum will include 16 existing graduate courses that will be strategically modified based on the recommendation of the PMI. As a result, minimal course development is required.</li> <li>MTSU currently has substantial online resource staff including internal instructional design and IT. These resources support the use of D2L, Zoom, and other learning technologies, ensuring the program's successful development and delivery of online courses.</li> </ul>   |                      |                      |                      |                                |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |
| <p><b>Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Please revise to include the following certificate programs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>University of Memphis, Business Project Management, CIP 06.11.1005.11, C4</b></li> <li><b>Tennessee Technological University, Project Management for the Professional, 16.24.0102.11, C4</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="561 968 1456 1444"> <thead> <tr> <th>CIP Code</th> <th>College/ University</th> <th>2019-2020 Completion</th> <th>2020-2021 Completion</th> <th>2021-2022 Completion</th> <th>Degree/ Certificate</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>52.0211</td> <td>Austin Peay State University</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>8</td> <td>Post-baccalaureate Certificate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>52.0211</td> <td>Christian Brothers University</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>Bachelor's Degree</td> </tr> <tr> <td>52.0211</td> <td>South College</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>Master's Degree</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | CIP Code             | College/ University  | 2019-2020 Completion | 2020-2021 Completion           | 2021-2022 Completion | Degree/ Certificate | 52.0211 | Austin Peay State University | 0 | 3 | 8 | Post-baccalaureate Certificate | 52.0211 | Christian Brothers University | 2 | 0 | 1 | Bachelor's Degree | 52.0211 | South College | 1 | 0 | 0 | Master's Degree |
| CIP Code   | College/ University  | 2019-2020 Completion | 2020-2021 Completion | 2021-2022 Completion | Degree/ Certificate            |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |
| 52.0211  | Austin Peay State University   | 0                    | 3                    | 8                    | Post-baccalaureate Certificate |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |
| 52.0211  | Christian Brothers University  | 2                    | 0                    | 1                    | Bachelor's Degree              |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |
| 52.0211  | South College  | 1                    | 0                    | 0                    | Master's Degree                |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |
| <p><b>Accreditation</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed program will be accredited by The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) through the Jones College of Business. The MSPM degree program will not have any specific accreditation requirements as all programs will be (re) accredited in regularly scheduled AACSB reviews. There will be no incremental cost for this accreditation. The next AACSB review will be in 2026.</li> <li>MTSU will seek affiliation and accreditation from the PMI's Global Accreditation Center (GAC) as an authorized training partner (ATP) to cover the technical skills component of the program. The</li> </ul>  |                      |                      |                      |                                |                      |                     |         |                              |   |   |   |                                |         |                               |   |   |   |                   |         |               |   |   |   |                 |

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|                                       | <p>proposed program would be the only PMI-accredited program in the state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If approved, MTSU's proposed program will be one of twenty-seven accredited programs in the United States and one of three in the Southeast.</li> <li>▪ By gaining ATP status, MTSU will stay current with PMI content to ensure students are receiving the most up-to-date education mapped to PMI certification criteria.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Administrative Structure</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed program will be housed in the Jones College of Business under the supervision of the Dean Dr. Joyce Heames. A copy of the organizational chart is located in the submitted LON.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Section III: Feasibility Study</b> |   |
| <b>Student interest</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In March and April 2023, 141 students from various majors including Accounting, Business Administration, Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Information Systems, Marketing, Supply Chain Management, and Professional Studies, completed a survey regarding interest in a Project Management, MSPM.</li> <li>▪ Of the respondents, approximately 122 students or 87 percent indicated that a MSPM in Project Management would be helpful for career advancement.</li> <li>▪ Approximately 86 students or 61 percent indicated a path toward a PMI certification embedded within a MSPM in Project Management would be "worthwhile".</li> <li>▪ Respondents preferred a fully online program (43 percent), with a hybrid approach being the second most common answer (30 percent).</li> <li>▪ A survey was conducted of MTSU Jones College of Business alumni and local industry representatives, with 180 respondents, concerning interest in the MSPM degree.</li> <li>▪ Of the respondents, 51 percent indicated they were currently working in a form of project management role.</li> <li>▪ Eighty-four percent of respondents do not hold any form of PMI certification, and 54 percent intend to seek PMI certification in the future.</li> <li>▪ Concerning the proposed MSPM degree, 58 percent of the respondents indicated an interest in pursuing the degree at MTSU.</li> <li>▪ Of the alum and industry responses, 78 percent indicated that a path toward PMI certification would be a useful component of the degree program.</li> <li>▪ 45 percent indicated a preference for a fully online program, with 31 percent preferring a hybrid program.</li> <li>▪ <b><i>Please provide survey questions and results in an Appendix in the NAPP.</i></b></li> </ul> |
| <b>Local and Regional Demand</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O*NET' reported 180 Project Management Specialist job openings in Tennessee as recent as April of 2023 with 106 of those jobs being in the Nashville area. O*NET also published 735 Information</li> </ul>   |

|  | <p>Technology Project Manager job openings in Tennessee as recent as April of 2023 with 428 of those jobs being in the Nashville area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regionally, over 7,800 job openings were identified for related SOC code categories (13-1082.00: Project Management Specialists) and 15-1299.09: Information Technology Project Managers), which also projected a seven and 10 percent growth over the next seven years, respectively.</li> </ul>  |                                 |                     |                                 |                     |                     |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Employer Demand</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>O*Net groups non-IT project managers into the “Project Management Specialists and Business Operations, All Other” category which is projected to grow 21 percent from 2020-2030 to over 30,000 employees in Tennessee.</li> <li>O*Net categorizes IT project managers into the “Computer Occupations with a Tennessee projected growth of 22 percent to more than 8,000 workers from 2020-2030.</li> <li>The THEC Supply and Demand Report identifies, on page 3, as an unmet need in cluster 5, “Data for nine regions in the state indicated a shortage of project management specialists; only one aligned academic program at the post-baccalaureate level, graduating fewer than ten graduates addressed this need.” In addition, the report identifies no graduates in the 52.0211 CIP code for 2020-2021.</li> <li>According to O*Net, national mean annual wage for Project Management Specialists is \$101,610.</li> </ul> |                                 |                     |                                 |                     |                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Community and Industry Partnerships</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed program will leverage the 50+ existing partnerships that the MTSU MS in Supply Chain Program and MBA – Healthcare Concentration program holds with local, regional, national, and international companies by extending the partnerships to cover project management aspects of the job.</li> <li>A list of significant industry partners including Amazon, Bridgestone/Firestone, Dollar General, and Nissan are provided in Table 7 on page 18 of the LON.</li> <li>Letters of support for the proposed program were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David Purdon, Chief Technology Officer, BlueCore Technologies</li> <li>Joe Roddy, Vice President &amp; Chief Project Officer, Parallon HCA Healthcare</li> <li>Matthew B. Wilkerson, Sr. Program Manager, Tractor Supply Co.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |                                 |                     |                                 |                     |                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections</b> |  |                                 |                     |                                 |                     |                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Projected Enrollment and Graduates</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attrition projections were based on the university’s average attrition rate (10 percent). Students will graduate in two years if they take two classes each semester for 5 semesters.</li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="561 1730 1425 1843"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Academic Year</th> <th>Projected Total Fall Enrollment</th> <th>Projected Attrition</th> <th>Projected Graduates</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>   | Year                            | Academic Year       | Projected Total Fall Enrollment | Projected Attrition | Projected Graduates |  |  |  |  |  |
| Year   | Academic Year  | Projected Total Fall Enrollment | Projected Attrition | Projected Graduates             |                     |                     |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |                                 |                     |                                 |                     |                     |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |   |           |    |   |    |
|--|---|-----------|----|---|----|
|  | 1 | 2024-2025 | 5  | 0 | 0  |
|  | 2 | 2025-2026 | 12 | 1 | 4  |
|  | 3 | 2026-2027 | 19 | 1 | 7  |
|  | 4 | 2027-2028 | 25 | 2 | 10 |
|  | 5 | 2028-2029 | 32 | 3 | 12 |

**Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver Proposed Program**

|                                |   |
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| <b>Faculty</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed program will initially be comprised of fifteen graduate courses that are already being offered in various graduate programs. Courses will later be modified based on the recommendation of the PMI and does not currently require any additional faculty or instructional staff.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Non-Instructional Staff</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new costs associated with the non-instructional staff are expected for this program</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Graduate Assistants</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new graduate assistants will be needed for this program. At present, there are no expectations of any new graduate assistant resources.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Accreditation</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredits the Jones College of Business. The MSPM degree program will not have any specific accreditation requirements as all programs will be (re) accredited in regularly scheduled AACSB reviews. There will be no incremental cost for this accreditation. The next AACSB review will be in 2026.</li> <li>The proposed program will seek accreditation/certification with the Project Management Institute. The costs are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial accreditation: \$12,500 (application fee, assessments and site visits) in planning and year 1.</li> <li>Recurring fees: \$12,500 annually (maintenance and training partner annual fee)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Consultants</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No consultants are required to develop or run this program.</li> <li><b><i>Please revise to provide evidence of a one-time external reviewer cost to complete the program proposal requirement.</i></b></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Equipment</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No equipment costs are required to develop or run this program.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Information Technology</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no additional information technology currently required for this proposed program.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Library Resources</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new library acquisitions will be required.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Marketing</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A projected marketing cost of \$10,000 per year is expected to generate and sustain awareness of the program.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Facilities</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new facilities will be required for this program.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Travel</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No travel expenses will be required for this program.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Other Resources</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No additional resources will be required for this program.</li> </ul>  |

**Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Tuition</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipated revenue in Year 1 is \$54,090, which will cover anticipated expenses (\$32,500). These calculations are based on the \$601 per credit hour cost of tuition. Year 1 totals assume 5 in-state, part-time students taking 6 credit hours per semester.</li> </ul> |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Projected revenues for Year 2 through 5 are based on increases in enrollment and a 10 percent attrition rate. Part-time students are anticipated to graduate in 24 months.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Grants</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No grants are expected to be used to fund this program.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Other</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The program will begin soliciting local industry partners for supporting funds in year 3 to support potential scholarships, PMI accreditation, and other student activities.</li> <li>▪ <b><i>Please explain the delay in solicitation of local industry partners.</i></b></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Appendices</b>                      |  |
| <b>Letters of Support</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Letters of support for the proposed program were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ David Purdon, Chief Technology Officer, BlueCore Technologies</li> <li>○ Joe Roddy, Vice President &amp; Chief Project Officer, Parallon HCA Healthcare</li> <li>○ Matthew B. Wilkerson, Sr. Program Manager, Tractor Supply Co.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                        |
| <b>THEC Financial Projections Form</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial Projections Form provided in Appendix B of the LON.</li> <li>▪ <b><i>Please include the cost of external review under one-time expenditures.</i></b></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Public Comment</b>                  |  |
| <b>Public Comments Received</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Letters of support were received as public comment from several individuals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Holly Gerald, Senior Director, Project Management, Parallon</li> <li>○ Tammy Reno, prospective student</li> <li>○ Hendrikje Genung, Senior Director, Logistics &amp; Materials Execution Integrated Business Planning, Pratt &amp; Whitney</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |