



October 31, 2025

Dr. Donde Ashmos Plowman  
Chancellor  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
800 Andy Holt Tower, 1331 Circle Park Drive  
Knoxville, TN 37996-0180

Dear Dr. Plowman:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

**New Program-Approval  
Undergraduate Certificate in Nuclear Deterrence**

Submission date:

**9/26/2025**

Intended Implementation date:

**1/20/2026**

Case ID:

**SC033441**

The institution included a list of its current programs.

The institution is seeking approval of the Undergraduate Certificate in Nuclear Deterrence. The program will be attractive to students pursuing careers in international relations, national defense and security, military service, or technology fields related to defense and strategic policy. The institution estimates an enrollment of 10-15 students per academic year, and the program will be ongoing.

The College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies (CECS) develops cutting-edge curriculum through collaboration of campus expertise. CECS works with industry partners to provide real-world, hands-on learning experiences through internships, capstone projects, and research opportunities. Tennessee hosts over 230 nuclear companies, and the certificate aligns with the state of Tennessee's emphasis on strengthening its nuclear sector workforce and enhancing national security capabilities.

The institution's mission is to *empower learners...advance prosperity...and commit to excellence, equity, and inclusion....* By providing research and training opportunities and

industry partnerships, the institution empowers learners and leads to increased accessibility in the field of nuclear deterrence and allied professions.

Interdisciplinary faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies, the College of Communication and Information, and the Tickle College of Engineering were involved in the development of the certificate. The program was reviewed and approved through the CECS processes for curriculum development and was approved by the institution's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Undergraduate Council, and Faculty Senate. As affirmed, the certificate did not require approval by the institution's governing board or by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

A curriculum for the 12-credit hour certificate was provided and included hours in required courses and hours in elective focus areas of technology, politics/policy, or leadership. A projected schedule of courses and course descriptions were included. Program completers will be qualified for junior positions in the federal government and military, national laboratories, think tanks, and international institutions specializing in defense and security. Learning outcomes were delineated and will be assessed through assignments/projects from select courses using faculty-developed rubrics.

Students admitted to the program must meet admissions standards established by the Undergraduate Council. Students may pursue the certificate on a full-time or part-time basis and must earn all hours of the program at the institution.

The program will be delivered through face-to-face instruction on the main campus.

Determination of credit hours is in accord with the institution's credit hour definition, which follows generally accepted standards. Curriculum and course approvals are channeled through designated committees (noted earlier), which provide faculty expertise and approval.

Program data will be gathered and monitored for program assessment by the Academic Operations Team. The Assistant Dean for Curriculum Strategic Initiatives will work with program faculty and the Academic Operations and Student Affairs teams to analyze program data and instructor and student feedback. The Assistant Dean reports to the Vice Provost and Founding Dean of CECS.

The institution provided a faculty roster with 17 full-time, one part-time, and two to-be-hired faculty to teach courses in the program. Faculty have demonstrable expertise for instruction of course content. Faculty workloads will not be negatively impacted. Faculty qualifications and adequacy of faculty appear appropriate. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team who will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.

Dr. Donde Ashmos Plowman  
October 31, 2025  
Page 3

Current library resources will support the certificate program, and examples of relevant databases and journals were included. All library resources are accessible online to students with their valid institutional NetID and password. Students are made aware of library resources via course syllabi and individual course orientation. The University of Tennessee (UT) Libraries' website serves to educate students regarding available resources and support services, such as library guides, specialized librarian for student assistance, and the AskUsNow librarian chat.

Students have access to established support services, including academic advising. The Responsive Industry Support Ecosystem Program (RISE) matches industry and professionals with learners pursuing careers in emerging employment sectors. Encompassed within RISE is the RISE Base Camp which introduces participants to industry professionals who are in various stages of their careers, giving students the opportunity to ask questions and network. The Career Catalyst is an annual event that connects leaders from corporations, small businesses, start-ups, government agencies, and higher education to design collaborative initiatives for emerging and future careers

Existing classroom space will accommodate the program. No specialized equipment is needed to support the program.

The institution provided a budget for the first three years of the program. Revenue will be realized from student tuition, and positive net revenue is projected beginning with the program implementation year. Financial support appears adequate, and the institution will assess program enrollment after three years of operation and will assess costs annually. Adequate contingency strategies were noted.

Student learning outcomes for the program will be included in the annual program assessment process. Data are collected and analyzed annually and reported formally every three years. Course evaluations provide student assessment data of quality of instruction, adequacy of library resources, technology, and others, and course evaluation results are shared with administration. The Department of Institutional Effectiveness coordinates annual program assessment and conducts an annual meta-assessment review and summary report, which is shared with faculty and the administration.

**SACSCOC staff reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Undergraduate Certificate in Nuclear Deterrence. I approve the program and include it in the scope of accreditation.**

An invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus is enclosed with the liaison's copy of this letter.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. J. Matthew Melton at (404) 994-6553 or via email at [mmelton@sacscoc.org](mailto:mmelton@sacscoc.org).

Dr. Donde Ashmos Plowman  
October 31, 2025  
Page 4

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen L. Pruitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" and last name "Pruitt" clearly distinguishable.

Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.  
President

SLP:MAC/sb

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Dr. Heather G. Hartman, Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, The  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Dr. J. Matthew Melton, Vice President, SACSCOC