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Add Master of Legal Studies Degree Program (SACSCOC Response)

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February 15, 2019

Dr. Heather G. Hartman
Assistant Vice Provost and
Accreditation Liaison
The University of Tennessee - Knoxville
527 Andy Holt Tower
Knoxville, TN 37996-0152

Dear Dr. Hartman:

Thank you for your letter of September 7, 2018, transmitting the prospectus for the new Master of Legal Studies (M.L.S.) degree program, effective August 2019.

The 30 credit hour M.L.S., which is consistent with the mission of the University of Tennessee - Knoxville, is designed to provide students with an understanding of the legal process. The primary target audience is individuals whose academic interests intersect with the law but do not wish to devote three years of full-time study to obtain a Juris Doctorate. Initial enrollment is projected to be two students, growing to 15 by the fifth year of the program. The M.L.S. program was approved by the Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee on April 1, 2018, and by the University Faculty on April 4, 2018, and was submitted to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. A comprehensive list of all other programs offered by the University was included, as well as a list of its approved off-campus instructional sites.

Admissions and graduation requirements were provided. The curriculum, course descriptions, and student learning outcomes were also provided along with a definition of credit hours. The M.L.S. program will be delivered through a combination of traditional face-to-face and distance learning instruction. Various tools will be used to assess student learning such as written assignments, exams, and a final thesis project. The program will be included in the University-wide institutional effectiveness process, which was described in detail. This annual review process examines student performance, curriculum, enrollment, and financial aspects of the program. Assessment results are used to make improvements as needed. Administrative oversight will be provided by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

The Faculty Roster describes the qualifications of the 29 full-time faculty members who will support the Master of Legal Studies program. The faculty members each have a Juris Doctorate degree and appear qualified to teach their assigned courses. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review teams who will assess the faculty as part of the institution's next SACSCOC accreditation review.



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Library and learning resources appear to be adequate. The Joel A. Katz Law Library has an extensive collection of physical and online resources such as databases, books/eBooks, journals, microforms, and audiovisual materials that support the Law Studies curriculum. The Library maintains a core legal collection that includes complete sets of appellate court opinions, statutory codes from each legislature, plus state and federal administrative codes. Access to these items is available to students either in person at the University's campus, or online through the Library website. Additional external materials are available through the Tennessee Electronic Library (TEL) or interlibrary loans from state and regional partners. Reference and research assistance is available from professional librarians, many of whom have legal degrees and experience practicing law. Services are provided in person, by phone, email, or via chat.

Student support services appear to be adequate and are available to all students. The University's One Stop Student Services offers standard academic support services such as financial aid, student records, and admissions in a single location. Additional support is provided to students through the offices of Career Counseling and Veterans Services. Faculty within the College of Law will serve as academic advisors for the M.L.S. students, with support from the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. The Division of Student Life is charged with improving the student experience outside the classroom by providing an engaging and enlightening atmosphere for living and learning. Crisis counseling and a Distressed Student Hotline are in place to help students who may be struggling with personal or behavioral issues.

Instruction for the Master of Legal Studies program will take place in the College of Law building which has 104,806 square feet of instructional space. This building includes ten principal classrooms, plus a classroom/courtroom adjacent to the clinical education space on the lower level. Additional instructional space is available in various conference rooms throughout the building. The facility also includes faculty/staff/student offices, the Katz Law Library, a faculty lounge, and multiple common spaces. Classrooms are equipped with computers, plain paper cameras, whiteboards, and internet access. The physical resources appear to be adequate to support the program's educational goals.

Financial support for the program appears to be adequate, and a projected five-year budget was provided. Revenues will be generated primarily through tuition and fees, and are expected to exceed expenditures each year of the program's operation. Since the M.L.S. program will use faculty and other resources from existing programs, the University estimates additional expenses to be minimal. These expenses will include items such as marketing and distance learning course development.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Master of Legal Studies degree program. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of the current accreditation.



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Please note that, at its meeting in June 2018, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approved modification of the “*Substantive Change Policy for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement*,” for any type of substantive change requiring approval. If an approved substantive change has not been implemented within two years of action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution will need to submit a new prospectus for the change or application for a level change.

Enclosed is an invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of review of the prospectus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/SKO:efk

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Wayne Davis, Interim Chancellor
Dr. Denise Y. Young



Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
 Commission on Colleges, Inc.
 1866 Southern Lane
 Decatur, GA 30033-4097

INVOICE

Date	Invoice #
2/15/2019	5202

Bill To
The University of Tennessee Dr. Jimmy G. Cheek Chancellor 527 Andy Holt Tower Knoxville, TN 37996-0152

Case ID	Due Date	Account #
	Due upon receipt	50445

Description	Amount
REVIEW OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE PROSPECTUS FEE	
Substantive Change Fee for transmitting the prospectus for the new Master of Legal Studies (M.L.S.) degree program, effective August 2019.	500.00
<p>Please include the Case ID on your check and on all correspondence with the commission regarding this submission.</p>	

Please make checks payable to SACSCOC. Attn:Business Office and/or Sharon Wilks Questions, please contact Sharon Wilks @ 404-679-4501 ext 4507 or 404-994-6540	Total	\$500.00
	Payments/Credits	\$0.00
	Balance Due	\$500.00

Phone #	Fax #	E-mail
404-679-4501 ext 4507	404-994-6590	swilks@sacscoc.org

Web Site
www.sacscoc.org