

Letter of Notification

Master of Science Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Updated: July 17, 2024

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Section I: Overview

Program Information

Institution:	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
College:	College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences
Department:	Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management
Title of Degree:	Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management
Concentrations:	None
Degree Designation:	Master of Science (MS)
CIP Code:	52.0901
CIP Code Title:	Hospitality Administration/Management, General
Proposed UT BOT Approval:	February 2025
Proposed THEC Approval:	May 2025
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 2025
Academic Program Liaisons:	Dr. Karen Galicia, Director of Academic Affairs 505 Summer Place / 1268B UT Tower University of Tennessee System, 37902 Phone 865-974-2140 Email: galicia@tennessee.edu Dr. Junehee Kwon, Department Head of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management 1215 W. Cumberland Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1900 Phone: 865-974-6609 Email: jkwon7@utk.edu



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, RESEARCH AND STUDENT SUCCESS

July 17, 2024

Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
312 Rosa L Parks Ave., 9th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Gentile

On behalf of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, please accept this Letter of Notification (LON) for a proposed Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (RHTM). The proposed program will be 30 credit hours and delivered asynchronously online. Specifically, the program aims to (1) provide retail, hospitality, and tourism students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and skills to improve their career progression and earning potential; (2) allow individuals with backgrounds in related fields to specialize in retail, hospitality, and tourism to differentiate themselves and enhance their employment opportunities; (3) prepare industry leaders in Tennessee and beyond; and (4) provide industry leaders with the opportunity to transition into educational roles like teaching at the higher education level, thereby contributing to the growth of future RHTM professionals. We believe the program will be a valuable addition to UTK, and we look forward to receiving an evaluation of the LON by THEC staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernie Savarese'.

Bernie Savarese, Ed.D.
Vice President of Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success
University of Tennessee System

CC: Donde Plowman
John Zomchick
Ozlem Kilic
Dixie Thompson
Heather Hartman
Ellen McIntyre
Junehee Kwon
Karen Galicia
Betty Dandridge Johnson

Campus Letter of Support



July 3, 2024

President Randy Boyd
505 Summer Place / UT Tower
Knoxville, TN 37902

President Boyd:

The College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences proposes a new online degree, the Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management. This new degree program marks a significant addition to our graduate offerings.

The proposed program is designed to cater to young professionals in or interested in joining the retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors by enhancing their analytics and leadership competencies, thereby also enhancing their career prospects and earning potential. By offering fully online asynchronous courses, the program aims to maximize accessibility, enabling students from across the State of Tennessee to pursue advanced education without geographical constraints. Moreover, the program's emphasis on industry partnerships integrates real-world situations into academic discourse, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of the retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors upon graduation.

Based on the favorable outcomes of the feasibility study, I am confident that the proposed program is finely attuned to the interests of young professionals and evolving industry demands. The program is well aligned with the strategic priorities of University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. Furthermore, the program is designed to make a positive impact on the state's economic prosperity, given the growth of the state's retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors.

With the anticipated positive impact of the program on various stakeholders within the University of Tennessee and throughout the state, I am pleased to express my strong support for the creation of an online Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management.

Sincerely,

John P. Zomchick
Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

cc: Donde Plowman
Bernie Savarese
Karen Galicia
Betty Dandridge Johnson
Ellen McIntyre
Junehee Kwon
Heather Hartman

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Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System

Section II: Background

Background Concerning Academic Program Development

The Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (RHTM) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) currently offers two undergraduate and doctoral degrees. The two undergraduate degree programs are (1) Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) and (2) Retail and Merchandising Management (RMM); the doctoral degree has two concentrations: (1) Hospitality and Tourism Management and (2) Retail and Consumer Sciences. We propose to add an online asynchronous master's degree in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (M.S. in RHTM) with the following justifications. First, there is a lack of retail, hospitality, and tourism management online master's programs in Tennessee statewide, particularly those offered asynchronously. While the University of Memphis and Middle Tennessee State University offer master's programs that contain tourism or hospitality as a component, their programs focus more on sport management. We will be the only program offering a retailing concentration at the master's level in Tennessee. Second, as the only program in Tennessee that offers a doctoral degree in retail, hospitality, and tourism management, the department has strength and experience in graduate education and is fully equipped to provide a high-quality master's degree. Third, our undergraduate students and alumni have expressed interest in a master's degree in retail or hospitality offered by RHTM. Fourth, our industry partners strongly advocate that combining a master's degree with practical work experience provides graduates with enhanced prospects for career advancement and increased earning potential. With this in mind, we have chosen to introduce a fully online asynchronous program. This approach enables individuals to seamlessly balance their ongoing work (and other) commitments while enriching their expertise and attaining a master's degree.

Purpose and Nature of Academic Program

Total credit hours: 30 credit hours. 7-week courses.

The proposed M.S. in RHTM at UTK is a 30-credit-hour program. Each 3-credit hour course is designed as a seven-week course, except for the thesis which will be throughout the entire semester. Classes will be fully online and asynchronous. Professionals with work experience in retail, hospitality, or tourism management may be qualified to be awarded up to 6 credits according to their demonstrated proficiency. Undergraduate students may take up to three master-level courses and earn nine credits while still enrolled in their undergraduate program, which would later fulfill the requirements for the master's degree in RHTM.

The credits awarded will be counted toward RHTM 591 Industry Experience in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism. Therefore, the students need to submit a portfolio to demonstrate that their work experience equips them with the learning outcomes of RHTM 591, which require that they:

1. Demonstrate self-awareness at the individual level and as a member of a business group by using written reflection.
2. Analyze the organization from a marketing perspective.
3. Apply management and communication skills in a business environment.
4. Apply problem-solving skills for performing job assignments.
5. Apply skills and knowledge acquired from the program in real-world settings.

Accordingly, the portfolio should have four sections:

- (1) **Number of years of managerial experience.** If the applicant has supervisory/managerial experience in retail, hospitality, or tourism-related business for one to two years, they are eligible to have three credits awarded. If the applicant has three or more years of managerial experience, they are eligible to have six credits awarded.
- (2) **A summary of the student's managerial experience that reflects Learning Outcomes 1-4.**
- (3) **A description of critical projects led by the applicant that reflects Learning Outcome 5,** including the title of the position, name of the project, duration of the project, and outcomes to show skills and knowledge applied in real-world settings. Preferred skills to be demonstrated include strategic planning, entrepreneurship, executive leadership, hospitality analytics, and sustainable tourism development.
- (4) **A recommendation letter from the applicant's supervisor that reinforces the applicant's managerial skills.**

The scoring sheet (Table 1) below will be used by the master program admission committee to evaluate the portfolio and decide whether a student can receive credits. Each criterion is scored 0 to 5, where 0 means the applicant fails to show the respective skill and 5 means the applicant mastered the respective skill. The minimum acceptable score for credit awarding is 25.

Table 1.

Portfolio Scoring Sheet

Portfolio Sections	Criteria	Score
(1) Screening	Number of years of managerial experience 1. One to two years of experience 2. Three or more years of experience	Qualified for: 3 credits 6 credits
(2) Summary of the applicant's supervisory/managerial experience in retail, hospitality, or tourism-related business (RHTM 591 Learning Outcomes 1-4)	1. Demonstrate self-awareness at the individual level and as a member of a business group by using written reflection.	0 1 2 3 4 5
	2. Analyze the organization from a marketing perspective.	0 1 2 3 4 5
	3. Apply management and communication skills in a business environment.	0 1 2 3 4 5
	4. Apply problem-solving skills for performing job assignments.	0 1 2 3 4 5
(3) A description of critical projects led by the applicant (RHTM 591 Learning Outcome 5)	Apply skills and knowledge acquired from the program in real-world settings. Preferred skills and knowledge to demonstrate: 1. Strategic planning skills 2. Entrepreneurship 3. Executive leadership 4. Hospitality analytics 5. Sustainable tourism development	0 1 2 3 4 5
(4) A recommendation letter from the applicant's supervisor	Reinforces the applicant's managerial skills	0 1 2 3 4 5
Total		/30

The feasibility study in Section III indicates that undergraduate students with a major or minor in RHTM are drawn to the accelerated bachelor's/master's program option. Given that their knowledge of the field is fresh and current, it is reasonable for them to continue their education and receive a master's degree in one year. To be eligible, they must adhere to the "[Seniors Eligible for Graduate Credit](#)" policies and have a minimum overall cumulative GPA of 3.30 in the term preceding enrollment in coursework applicable to the master's degree. Additionally, students must have majored or minored in either RMM or HTM. Those interested in the accelerated program and

eligible will apply and obtain conditional admission before taking a graduate course. The master program admission committee will review their application. Students conditionally admitted to the accelerated program must apply for admission to the Graduate School and the M.S. in RHTM program during their fourth year of undergraduate study, following the standard application procedure.

Delivery method: Asynchronous online

All courses will be offered asynchronously online to allow potential students the flexibility of taking classes. According to a Lightcast report, among students who completed a retail, hospitality, or tourism management-related master's degree, 67% of them graduated from an online program. Therefore, students prefer online retail, hospitality, and tourism management programs. The program will utilize UTK Digital Learning's assistance for course design and development. UTK Digital Learning Media Studio offers technical support such as lecture recording studios, lightboard in studios, 360° video capture, drone videography, motion design, etc. UTK Digital Learning also has video production specialists and instructional designers specializing in digital learning. They will be consulted when designing and producing the courses.

Course Options and Progress:

The program's coursework has three phases (Table 2). Each phase builds on the previous one to achieve high-level learning objectives via a scaffolding approach. The first phase is the foundations of consumer and market research that apply to all retail, hospitality, and tourism-related businesses. These courses enable students to use qualitative and quantitative market research methods to analyze consumer/industry trends in retail, hospitality, and tourism to make informed and data-driven decisions that improve customer experiences and business competitiveness. The second phase dives deeper into specific skills and knowledge leaders need in retail, hospitality, and tourism-related businesses. The third phase is applied learning, which is customized to each student's needs and experiences. They will complete and reflect on their industry experience and conduct a research project. Students will also have opportunities to participate in international study tours to apply what they learn in a different cultural context and internships to apply their gained knowledge in the industry. While completing the industry research project or thesis, the student will work closely with a faculty member to investigate a topic either in retailing or hospitality and tourism management. As the program expands, additional elective courses focusing on specific topics within retailing or hospitality and tourism management will be developed to enrich the offerings for the two interest areas.

Table 2.

Course Options and Progress

Phases	Courses
Phase 1 Foundation (12 Credits)	• The Changing Landscape in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism • Customer Experience Management • Qualitative Market Research • Quantitative Market Research
Phase 2 Advanced Topics (9-12 Credits)	• Strategic Planning in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management • Entrepreneurship & Small Business Management in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism • Executive Leadership in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism • Advanced Hospitality Analytics • Critical Sustainable Tourism
Phase 3 Applied Learning (6-9 Credits)	• Industry Research Project in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism (3 credits) or Thesis (6 credits) • Industry Experience in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism • International Study Tour in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management

Target audience:

- (1) Individuals in retail, hospitality, and tourism industries who wish to advance their careers,
- (2) Individuals in retail, hospitality, and tourism industries who wish to enter higher education in RHTM as instructors or advisors,
- (3) Individuals in other fields but wish to transit to RHTM fields, and
- (4) Current undergraduate students who major in RHTM or related areas who want to prepare for potential opportunities that require a master's degree (e.g., consultant, higher education professionals, career advancement).

The purposes of the proposed program are to:

- (1) Provide retail, hospitality, and tourism students/individuals an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and skills to improve their career progression and earning potential;
- (2) Allow individuals who have backgrounds in related fields to specialize in the fields of retail, hospitality, and tourism to differentiate themselves and enhance their employment opportunities;
- (3) Prepare well-equipped leaders for the retail, hospitality, and tourism industries in Tennessee and the surrounding states; and

- (4) Provide industry leaders with the opportunity to transition into educational roles, such as teaching at the higher education level, thereby contributing to the growth of future RHTM professionals.

Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission

State Master Plan

The THEC State Master Plan 2015-2025 mainly focuses on increasing the educational attainment levels of Tennesseans while “addressing the state’s economic development, workforce development, and research needs; ensuring increased degree production within the state’s capacity to support higher education; and using institutional mission differentiation to realize statewide efficiencies through institutional collaboration and minimized redundancy in degree offerings, instructional locations, and competitive research.”

According to Tennessee's Economy Report 2022-2023, in 2030, Leisure and Hospitality (including “Accommodation and Food Services” and “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation”) will be ranked number two, and Retail Trade will be number four in Tennessee by employment. Tourism, Hospitality, and Retail Trade will offer 723,636 jobs statewide in 2030. Therefore, providing high-quality educational programs, such as a master’s degree in RHTM, is essential for the state’s economic and workforce development. It allows individuals in these industries to deepen their leadership and analytical skills to improve their career progression and earning potential. These industries in Tennessee will also benefit by having well-equipped leaders and entrepreneurs.

Regarding differentiation and statewide efficiencies in degree offerings, the proposed M.S. in RHTM will be the only *online* master’s degree focusing on retail, hospitality, and tourism management in Tennessee. It will also be the only master’s level program in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management in East Tennessee, where the retail, hospitality, and tourism industries play pivotal roles in the regional economy and constantly need a quality workforce.

As Tennessee’s premier institution, it is inherent to UTK’s mission to address this void in the state’s degree programs.

The Master Plan updated in 2020 further pointed out three specific areas to act on for achieving the goals of higher education development in Tennessee, namely:

1. Student success: academic readiness, access to higher education, and completion
2. Family prosperity: affordability, transparency, and outreach to adults
3. The future workforce: future of work, career and technical education and work-based learning, and academic program approval

While the Master Plan is geared more toward expanding undergraduate education, the design of the M.S. in RHTM can extend the same goals to graduate-level professional education.

First, for academic readiness, our faculty will work with students one-on-one. For those who do not have a background in retail, hospitality, or tourism but want to change careers to these fields, we will instruct them to take undergraduate-level introductory courses as prerequisites to beginning the

M.S. program. The introductory courses are also offered online, so the online master's students can take them without changing modality. For access to higher education, the online asynchronous setting allows flexibility with location and working while earning a degree. According to a survey conducted by UT Digital Learning, we recognize that a significant portion of UTK's online student body—over 70%—balances rigorous coursework with substantial work commitments exceeding 30 hours weekly, with about one-third also shouldering responsibilities for childcare and eldercare ¹. Therefore, our online platform offers enhanced accessibility. To support their journey to completion, students will receive comprehensive assistance from within the department and across campus. Our program director will provide personalized guidance on course selection and scheduling within the department. Moreover, students will have full access to a wide array of UTK services, including but not limited to the Libraries, Office of Innovative Technologies, and Center for Career Development & Academic Exploration.

Second, for family prosperity, the online master's degree offered by UTK will be affordable, accessible, and target adult learners. Online programs can be cheaper as they allow students to maintain income from part or full-time jobs, reduce transportation and vehicle expenses, avoid on-campus housing costs, reduce fees for on-campus services, and reduce out-of-state tuition compared to in-person programs. Specifically, the proposed M.S. in RHTM program is relatively more affordable than similar programs offered by comparable institutions, especially for in-state students (Table 3). All tuition listed is for online students. Florida International University and the University of Central Florida offer the two largest online master's programs in hospitality and tourism management. Purdue University also offers a top hospitality management program. Considering the program is entirely online, technically, students from Tennessee can enroll in their programs. The University of Kentucky's program is comparable because it also combines retail with hospitality.

¹ Josh Steele on Who is the Online UT student?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzPle8E7bSw>

Table 3.

Comparable Online Master's Degree Tuition with Proposed M.S. in Retail, Hospitality & Tourism Management

School	Degree	Price Per Credit Hour	Total	Note
UTK	M.S. in Retail, Hospitality, & Tourism Management	\$700	\$21,000	In-state
		\$775	\$23,250	Out-of-state
Florida International University ²	M.S. in Hospitality Management	\$818	\$27,000	All students
University of Central Florida ³	M.S. in Hospitality & Tourism Management	\$327	\$10,802	In-state
		\$1,152	\$38,007	Out-of-state
Purdue University ⁴	M.S. in Hospitality and Tourism Management	\$766	\$26,055	In-state
		\$844	\$28,690	Out-of-state
University of Kentucky ⁵	M.S. in Retailing & Tourism Management	\$737	\$22,110	All students

Third, regarding the future workforce, the curriculum is designed for individuals to gain applicable leadership and analytical skills. The coursework has built-in experiential learning and applied learning components such as case studies, research projects, and reflections on work experience. Students lacking industry experience will be required to complete industry experience to complete the degree. This design allows students to smoothly transfer their learning from the program to the workplace environment.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville Strategic Vision

The overarching vision of UTK is “A world enriched by our ideas, improved through our action, and inspired by the Volunteer spirit of service and leadership,” according to the UTK Strategic Vision published in 2021. To fulfill this vision, UTK’s mission is to be a diverse community with a shared commitment to discovery, creativity, and education by:

- Empowering learners of all ages and backgrounds to achieve their dreams through accessible and affordable education and state-of-the-art research training opportunities;
- Advancing the prosperity, well-being, and vitality of communities across Tennessee and around the world through our research, teaching, service, and engagement;

² <https://fiuonline.fiu.edu/programs/online-graduate-degrees/master-of-science-in-hospitality-management.php>

³ <https://www.ucf.edu/online/degree/hospitality-and-tourism-management-m-s/>

⁴ <https://hhs.purdue.edu/graduate-programs/online-master-of-science-in-hospitality-and-tourism-management/>

⁵ <https://online.uky.edu/masters/retailing-tourism-management/ms>

- Committing to excellence, equity, and inclusion within the university, across the state, and in all our global activities.

Specifically, the university identifies five goals for achieving our mission:

1. Cultivating the volunteer experience: Demonstrate leadership in providing high-quality educational opportunities for people at every stage of life, whenever and wherever they seek to learn.
2. Conducting research that improves lives: Advance the frontiers of knowledge to create a more just, prosperous, and sustainable future through world-class research, scholarship, and creative work.
3. Ensuring a culture where vol is a verb: Develop and sustain a nurturing university culture where diversity and community are enduring sources of strength.
4. Making ourselves agile & adaptable: Empower and sustain a culture of collaboration, agility, and innovation throughout the university.
5. Embodying the modern R1, land-grant university: Connect with every Tennessean and communities worldwide, inspiring future Volunteers to join our diverse community.

The proposed M.S. in RHTM can potentially contribute to all five of the university goals in the following ways:

- University Goal #1: The online M.S. in RHTM directly contributes to this goal of providing high-quality educational opportunities for people at every stage of life, whenever and wherever they seek to learn. The M.S. in RHTM is intentionally designed for adult learners and professionals to advance their knowledge and skills. According to UT Digital Learning, the average age of UTK's online students is 32⁶. It can also help adults with career transition. It supports individuals entering retail, hospitality, and tourism management. It also allows industry leaders to transition from industry to academia to educate future professionals.
- University Goal #2: Adding the M.S. in RHTM program would enhance the research productivity of the Department of RHTM. The RHTM graduate faculty are active researchers and consistently publish in their respective fields in top journals. The master's students will bring more industry perspectives and ideas, strengthening the department's research contribution. The online M.S. students can opt in for a thesis track, which will prepare them for a doctoral degree. The Department of RHTM can recruit Ph.D. students from the well-trained master students to enhance its doctoral program and future research output.
- University Goal #3: An online asynchronous program allows for better accessibility and inclusivity. Adults who must work and care for children or older adults can continue their responsibilities while investing in their career development. We will also connect the

⁶ Josh Steele on Who is the Online UT student?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzPle8E7bSw>

students with our industry partners in the East Tennessee area, providing opportunities for students to engage with local businesses and enabling these businesses to hire our graduates.

- University Goal #4: Retail, hospitality, and tourism are industries that embrace innovation and change. The M.S. in RHTM program will equip students with critical skills to understand the ever-changing market dynamics and foster adaptability and resilience. Our faculty are experts in entrepreneurship and diversity.
- University Goal #5: The M.S. in RHTM curriculum is designed to prepare students for a globalized market. For example, they will have the opportunity to participate in international study tours or international internships to gain first-hand experiences in the fields of retail, hospitality, or tourism in another country. Our faculty are experts in international education and global competence.

College Strategic Vision

The 2021-2025 Strategic Vision of the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences identified four goals for the college:

1. Develop world-class programs designed for the needs of today and the future and develop outstanding teaching faculty for these programs to increase student enrollment and ensure student success.
2. Engage in and produce high-impact research and scholarship.
3. Directly and visibly impact our local and global community.
4. Enhance the working environment for staff and faculty in the college to achieve Goals 1-3.

The proposed M.S. in RHTM aligns with the college goals, especially Goals #1, 2, and 3, which are about teaching, research, and outreach.

- College Goal #1: Adding a master's program will directly increase graduate student enrollment in the college. Additionally, adding a master's degree can potentially attract more undergraduate students to RHTM, as the master's program allows them to earn a bachelor's and a master's degree in five years. The modality of the online master's program, emphasizing experiential learning and applied learning, can also contribute to this goal by enhancing student learning experiences and success.
- College Goal #2: This goal is aligned with University Goal #2, and the new M.S. in RHTM program can contribute to research in three ways. 1. The students will learn research skills to conduct their own market research as part of their program requirements. 2. The students' industry background and newly acquired research skills allow them to collaborate with the graduate faculty in RHTM to develop industry-relevant research ideas. 3. The master students may choose the thesis track to prepare them to pursue a Ph.D. in RHTM.

These opportunities will enhance the department's research quality and scholarship outcomes.

- College Goal #3: Retail, hospitality, and tourism play an important role in Tennessee's economy. In 2030, retail, tourism, and hospitality together are projected to offer almost 20% of all jobs in Tennessee, according to Tennessee's Economy Report 2022-2023⁷ Therefore, by offering a master's degree in RHTM, we can prepare leaders in these industries to enhance Tennessee's economy. More specifically, the program will partner with local and regional businesses to allow students to work on "real-world" issues. Such collaboration fosters students' experiential learning, establishes connections between students and local businesses, and offers these businesses innovative solutions to their identified challenges.

⁷ <https://www.tn.gov/workforce/general-resources/major-publications0/major-publications-redirect/public-reports-redirect/tennessees-economy.html>

Institutional Capacity to Deliver the Proposed Program

The proposed M.S. in RHTM program will positively influence UTK's institutional capacity because it is the only program offered by UTK focusing on retail, hospitality, and tourism management. UTK undergraduate students interested in these industries will not need to search for other universities to earn a master's degree in these industries. It will also be the only online master's degree in RHTM in Tennessee. Therefore, it should increase the enrollment of graduate students at UTK.

Existing Programs Offered at TN Institutions

To our knowledge, no other online master's degree in retail, hospitality, and tourism management (CIP code: 52.0901) is offered in Tennessee. Two programs in related areas exist and appear in Table 4. While they include a hospitality or tourism component, the University of Memphis leans more toward Sport Management, as shown by the number of degrees awarded. Middle Tennessee State University focuses more on Leisure and Sport, which is evident in its courses. There is currently no online program in Tennessee that focuses on retail.

Table 4.

Related Programs in Tennessee

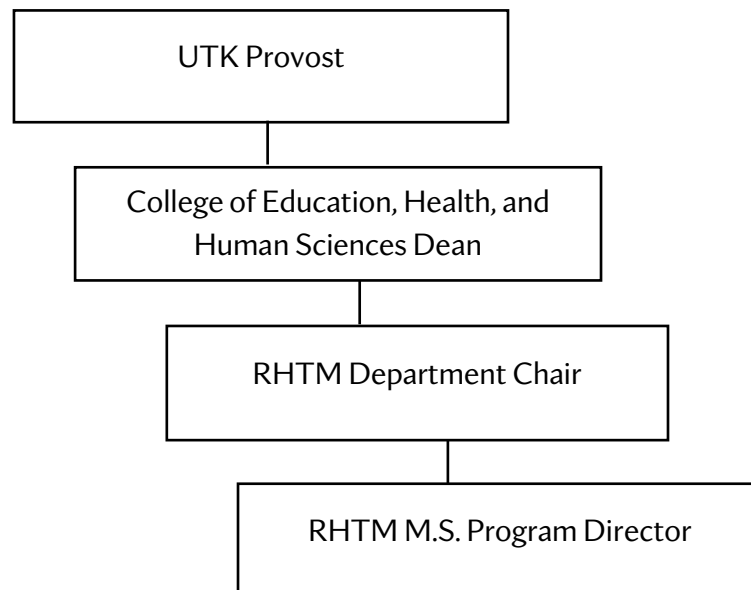
Institution Name	Program Title and Degree Designation	CIP Code	Description/Focus of Program	Miles from UTK Campus	Degrees Awarded for 3 Years
University of Memphis	Sport and Hospitality Management (M.S.)	31.0504	Face-to-face, with some coursework available online. Two concentrations: sport management and hospitality management.	381	2022-2023: Sport: 22 Hospitality: 3 2021-2022: Sport: 15 Hospitality: 10 2020-2021: Sport: 28 Hospitality: 3
Middle Tennessee State University	Leisure, Sport, and Tourism Management (M.S.)	31.0504	Face-to-face. Prepare individuals to lead leisure and sport organizations or conduct research in these areas. Two years.	158	2019-2020: 21 2020-2021: 14 2021-2022: 7

Accreditation

The Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA) accredits programs at the associate and bachelor's degree level. Therefore, ACPHA would not be applicable for the proposed M.S. RHTM program.

Administrative Structure

The M.S. in RHTM program will be housed in the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. The program director will work directly with the department chair and be a faculty member responsible for coordinating the program, recruiting students, managing the curriculum, and planning and scheduling courses.



Section III: Feasibility Study

Student Interest

We conducted two surveys to evaluate student interest—one with current undergraduate students and the other with retail, hospitality, and tourism professionals.

Survey 1: Current Undergraduate Students

An online survey was conducted to evaluate current students' interest in the proposed master's program; 130 UTK undergraduate students completed the survey.

Data Collection and Participant Profile

One of the RHTM faculty members crafted the online survey using Qualtrics software, and the Department of RHTM disseminated it via email from February 16 to March 8, 2024. The survey was sent to all 221 current RHTM undergraduate students, the main target student group of the new program. The survey was also sent to students in five online asynchronous undergraduate courses offered by RHTM, such as HTM 102 Introduction to Travel and Tourism and RMM 210 Introduction to Retail Management, open to all majors and years (first year through fifth year). Contacting these students allowed us to reach RMM, HTM minors, and other students interested in our courses.

The survey contained three sections. (1) The first section asked students about their general interest in pursuing a master's degree. (2) The students were then provided with a brief description of the proposed online M.S. in RHTM, and they rated their interest in applying to this new program. (3) Background information about the students was collected, such as their school year and majors. Student profile information is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5.

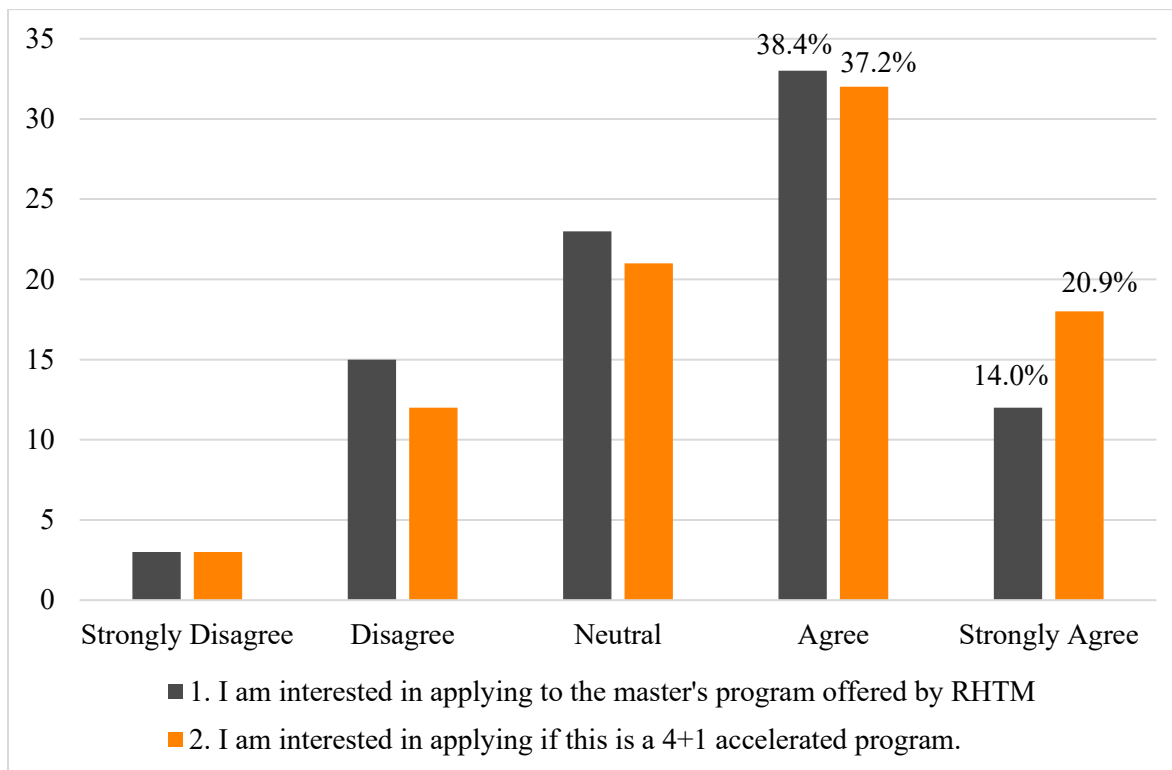
Participant Profile

Profiles	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Major and Minor	RMM Major	31	23.8%
	HTM Major	38	29.2%
	RMM Minor	11	8.5%
	RMM Minor	6	4.6%
	Not RHTM major or minor	44	33.8%
Year in School	First Year	21	16.2%
	Second Year	34	26.2%
	Third Year	37	28.5%
	Fourth Year	32	24.6%
	Fifth Year	6	4.6%
State of Residency	Tennessee	61	46.9%
	North Carolina	9	6.9%
	California	8	6.2%
	Georgia	6	4.6%
	Illinois	6	4.6%
	Ohio	6	4.6%
	Other	34	26.2%

Results: Student Interest in M.S. in RHTM

Among the 86 RMM and HTM majors and minors, before learning about the proposed program, 37.2% ($n = 32$) of them reported that they were interested (agree or strongly agree) in pursuing a master's degree in general. After reading the description of the proposed online M.S. in RHTM, 52.3% ($n = 45$) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested in applying to the master's program offered by RHTM. Students' interest in the proposed program exceeded their general interest in earning a master's degree. The 4+1 accelerated master program option is particularly attractive to current students. Fifty (58.1%) were interested in applying if the program is a 4+1 accelerated program. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. HTM & RMM majors & minors: Interest in Applying to the Proposed Program ($n = 86$)



Other students who were not a major or minor in RMM or HTM ($n = 44$) showed less interest in the proposed program. Even so, seven of them reported that they were interested in the 4+1 accelerated program.

Additionally, when checking students' responses by their year in school, the results showed that 16 fourth-year and 22 third-year students were interested in the 4+1 accelerated program. These numbers will be useful when predicting enrollment, especially in the first few years after the program is launched.

These results showed the following:

- (1) RHTM undergraduate students expressed a strong desire to pursue a master's degree, yet this aspiration remains unfulfilled. This issue is particularly pronounced among students from Tennessee, who lack access to fully online options within the state.
- (2) RHTM students are very likely to be attracted by the proposed program, especially the 4+1 accelerated program option.

- (3) Students not enrolled in RMM or HTM majors or minors showed reduced interest in RHTM courses, even when available. Leveraging this insight can guide our promotional efforts effectively as we introduce the new program on campus.

Survey 2: Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Industry Professionals

Another online survey evaluated the interest of retail, hospitality, and tourism professionals in the proposed master's program. A total of 1,022 valid responses were collected.

Data Collection and Participant Profile

The survey was designed using Qualtrics and distributed by the Department of RHTM between March 7 and 11, 2024. The survey was distributed through faculty's personal social media pages, including LinkedIn and Facebook, and five associations in Tennessee sent email invitations:

- Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association
- Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association
- Greater Nashville Hospitality Association
- Sevier County Hospitality and Tourism Association
- Visit Chattanooga Tourism Authority

The survey contained three sections: (1) The participants were given a description of the proposed program and asked to rate their interest in applying. (2) Participants' educational background, including their degree level and years since graduation, were collected. (3) Participants' work experiences, such as their industry and positions, were collected. Additionally, an open-ended question was asked at the end to elicit more comments and questions to allow the participants to express themselves freely. Also, participants' email addresses were collected, and permission to use their emails was acquired for future program promotion purposes. The professional participants' profiles are reported in Table 6 below.

Table 6.

Professional Participants' Profile

Profiles	Responses	Categories	Frequency	Percent (Out of Responses)
Bachelor's degree	1,012	Yes	797	78.8%
		No	206	20.4%
		Prefer not to answer	9	0.9%
Bachelor's major	535	RHTM related	356	66.5%
		Other Business Majors	82	15.3%
		Other	97	18.1%
Years passed since college graduation	797	2 years or less	284	35.6%
		3-4 years	356	44.7%
		5-6 years	130	16.3%
		7-8 years	15	1.9%
		9-10 years	7	0.9%
		More than 10 years	5	0.6%
Have a master's degree	797	Yes	209	26.2%
		No	588	73.8%
Industry		Retail	317	31.9%
		Hospitality & Tourism	656	66.1%
		Other	20	2.0%
State currently living in	987	Tennessee	316	32.0%
		California	146	14.8%
		New York	95	9.6%
		Florida	55	5.6%
		Texas	46	4.7%
		New Jersey	42	4.3%
		Illinois	30	3.0%
		Other	257	26.0%

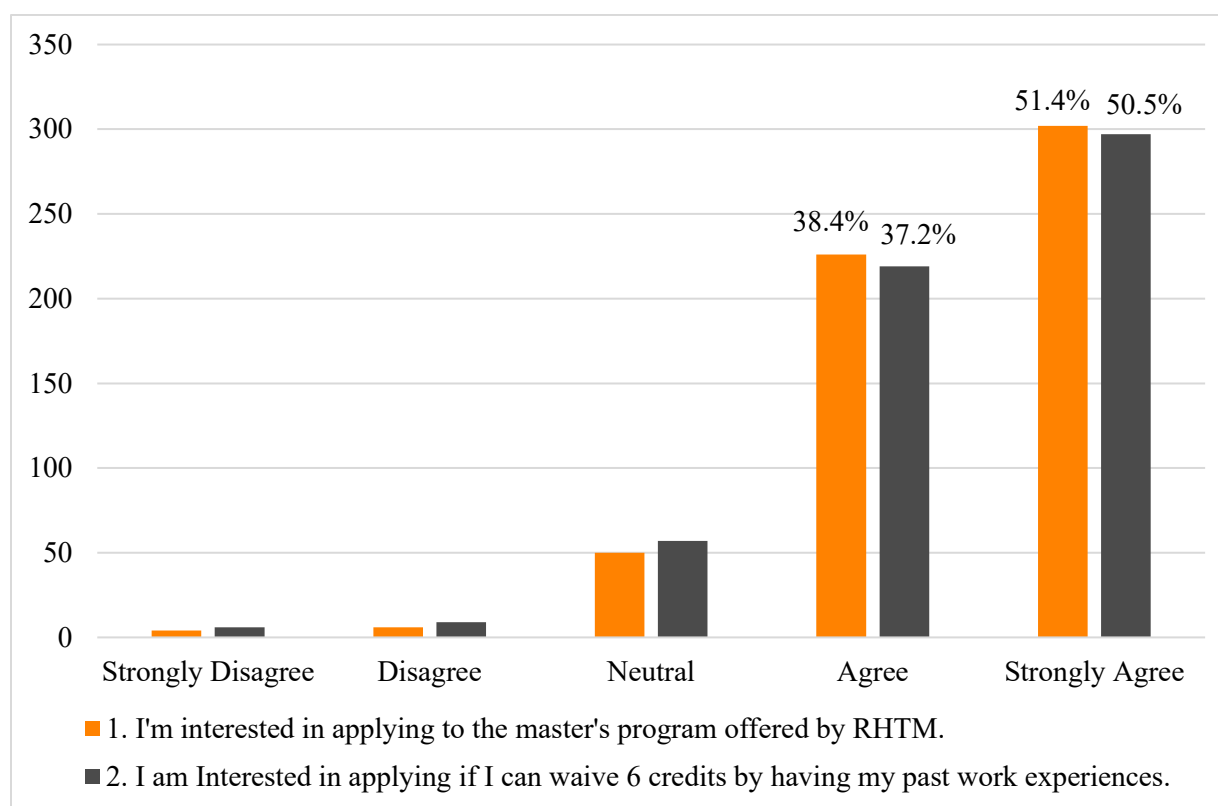
Results: Industry Interest in M.S. in RHTM

The analysis initially targeted the subset of participants ($n = 588$) who have obtained a bachelor's degree but have not pursued a master's degree, rendering them both eligible and inclined to apply. Many respondents (66.5%) had an undergraduate degree in retail, hospitality, tourism, or event management. Another 15.3% had other business majors, such as marketing or business administration. This result highlights that prospective applicants may possess varying educational backgrounds, indicating that a few students lacking prior education in RHTM-related fields may require introductory courses to bridge the gap.

This group of participants' interests in the proposed program were overwhelmingly positive. Approximately half of this group (51.4%, $n = 302$) showed strong interest in applying to the proposed program. More broadly, nine out of ten (89.8%, $n = 528$) agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested in applying. Interestingly, waiving six credit hours with work experience was slightly less attractive to professionals than completing all 30 credit hours. One explanation is that 80% of the respondents graduated from college less than four years ago; thus, they lack extensive managerial work experience. See Figure. 2.

Figure 2.

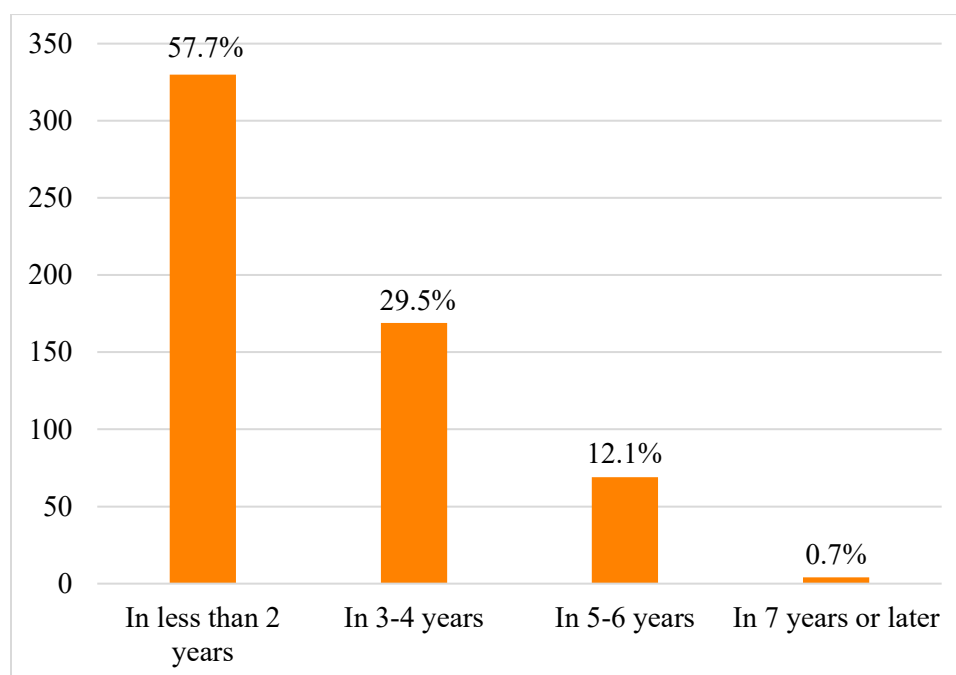
Professionals' (holding a bachelor's degree) Interest in the Proposed Program ($n = 588$)



Next, the interested participants (agree or strongly agree) in the program were asked how soon they would apply for the degree. Over half of this group (57.7% $n = 330$) indicated they would apply in less than two years, and 29.5% ($n = 169$) reported that they would apply in three to four years (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.

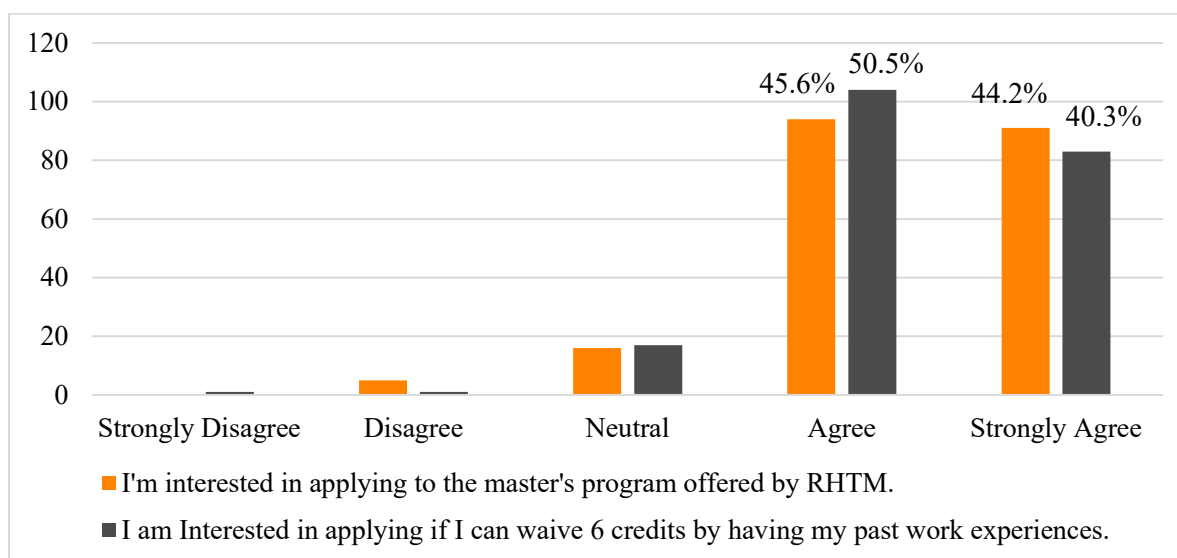
If you are to pursue an online master's degree in RHTM, how soon will you consider applying to the program? ($n = 572$)



Surprisingly, the participants who did not hold a bachelor's degree ($n = 206$) shared the same passion for the online master's degree. Overall, 90% were interested in applying to the proposed program, whereas 44.2% ($n = 92$) showed strong interest (Figure 4). Although they were not eligible to apply immediately, these findings underscore professionals' favorable perceptions of a master's degree program, indicating a potential pool of future students.

Figure 4.

Professionals' (no bachelor's degree) Interest in the Proposed Program ($n = 206$)



Additionally, a total of 395 valuable comments were collected through the open-ended question: “Tell us if you have any comments, thoughts, or questions about the proposed online master’s degree in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism at UTK.” The comments echoed the quantitative results above and showed positive sentiment, especially when the respondents praised the online program’s flexibility. Below are select quotes that highlight their sentiments:

“As a recent graduate from the RHTM department, I can attest to the quality of education and resources available at UTK. I am confident that the online master’s degree program will uphold the same standards and provide students with a well-rounded education in the field of retail, hospitality, and tourism.”

“I’ve always been intrigued about the RHTM program, and I’m glad I’m finally getting an opportunity to apply for the master’s program.”

“I think the design of this course fully reflects its forward-looking and innovation. In the current era of rapid digital development, the retail, hospitality, and tourism industry is undergoing profound changes, so offering such an online master’s degree program is undoubtedly a platform for students to stay abreast of the latest developments in the industry and acquire cutting-edge knowledge and skills.”

Beyond expressing interest and support, the respondents also provided valuable suggestions that will be incorporated into the program design. The suggestions mainly centered around online learning experiences, topics to include in the curriculum, and career development opportunities. (1)

Regarding learning experiences, the respondents emphasized the importance of hands-on learning. Although the courses are offered online, the respondents want to engage in project-based learning and learn from industry experts. (2) Specific topics were gleaned from the comments, with the most sought-after being the opportunity to learn about current industry trends. A core course centered on this aspect has already been formulated. Other popular areas of interest, such as technology, cross-cultural competencies, leadership, and sustainability, will also be integrated into our curriculum. (3) For career development, the respondents hope that the program will provide networking opportunities and career planning services.

In conclusion, retail, hospitality, and tourism management professionals are enthusiastic about the online master's program proposed by RHTM at UTK. They appreciate having a master's degree tailored to their industry and are eager to apply. Per these data results, young professionals who graduated from college less than five years ago should remain our main target group.

Local and Regional Need/Demand

Tourism generated a record \$28.9 billion in domestic travel spending in 2022. It increased 19% over the prior year and 18% above pre-pandemic levels ⁸. Tennessee has been the fastest-growing state in travel spending since 2018, rising from 14th to 11th in the nation. According to the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development's report on Tennessee visitor profiles, shopping ranked as the top activity visitors would engage in. More specifically, 33% of the visitors chose shopping as part of their activities, seven percentage points higher than the national average. Therefore, offering retail with hospitality and tourism in one program is a holistic approach toward preparing leaders in related fields.

Overall, the Leisure and Hospitality industry will generate 113,786 more positions by 2030 compared to 2020 statewide and is highlighted as the industry that is “spurring employment growth” in the state (Table 7)⁹. For future employment growth in Tennessee in 2020-2030, the Accommodation and Food Services sector offers the highest number of new positions, 93,620, according to Jobs4TN.gov, while the Art, Entertainment, and Recreation sector is first in terms of percent increase (60%).

Table 7.

Tennessee Statewide Tourism and Hospitality-Related Employment Projection

Industry	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Average Annual Percent Change	Total Employment Change
Leisure and Hospitality	292,821	406,607	3.34%	113,786
Accommodation and Food Services	259,313	352,933	3.13%	93,620
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	21,079	31,329	4.04%	10,250

One of Tennessee's largest leisure and hospitality employment markets is East Tennessee, where the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is located. The projected total employment in East Tennessee in leisure and hospitality is 92,732, with a 3.64% average annual growth rate from 2020 to 2030 (Table 8).

⁸ Economic Impact of Visitors in Tennessee 2022: <https://tdtdfiles.egnyte.com/fl/824ZNZbl0j#folder-link/2022%20Tourism%20Economics%20Statewide%20Report?p=e0d905fd-744d-4373-b757-17b17c8bd6b2>

⁹ Tennessee's Economy Report 2022-2023 <https://www.tn.gov/workforce/general-resources/major-publications0/major-publications-redirect/public-reports-redirect/tennessees-economy.html>

Table 8.

East TN Tourism and Hospitality-Related Employment Projection

Industry	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Average Annual Percent Change	Total Employment Change
Leisure and Hospitality	64,855	92,732	3.64%	27,877
Accommodation and Food Services	55,809	78,264	3.44%	22,455
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	6967	10,576	4.26%	3,609

The data above reveal the scale and expansion of Tennessee's tourism and hospitality industry. While it does not show the number of positions requiring a master's degree, with such growth, the need for higher-level managerial positions and people with stronger analytics skills will naturally grow.

The scope of the retail industry is like that of accommodation and food services in Tennessee. In 2022, retail trade was one of the top three industries in Tennessee in terms of employment. By 2030, retail trade will provide 317,029 jobs statewide.¹⁰ Potential jobs for an individual with a master's degree concentrated in retail and consumer sciences include but are not limited to purchasing managers, marketing managers, online merchants, market research analysts, and marketing specialists. According to O*Net Online, these positions are all anticipated to grow in Tennessee and adjacent states.¹¹ (Table 9).

¹⁰ Tennessee's Economy Report 2022-2023 <https://www.tn.gov/workforce/general-resources/major-publications0/major-publications-redirect/public-reports-redirect/tennessees-economy.html>

¹¹ O*Net Online: <https://www.onetonline.org/>

Table 9.

Retail Related Employment Projection in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia

Occupation	Median Pay \$ (2022)	Market	2020 Estimated Jobs	2030 Projected jobs	% 10-year Change	Annual job openings
Purchasing Managers	124,470	Tennessee	1,620	1,970	22%	170
	127,110	North Carolina	2,400	2,670	11%	220
	124,890	Georgia	2,320	2,610	13%	220
Marketing Managers	124,470	Tennessee	5,090	6,360	25%	600
	133,980	North Carolina	8,510	9,820	15%	890
	136,320	Georgia	9,290	10,610	14%	960
Online Merchants (including project management specialists and business operations specialists)	62,300	Tennessee	24,820	30,110	21%	2,510
	68,380	North Carolina	32,370	34,580	7%	2,640
	75,990	Georgia				
			66,230	73,520	11%	5,780
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	60,770	Tennessee	9,660	12,920	34%	1,420
	65,710	North Carolina	22,360	29,010	30%	3,150
	70,480	Georgia	19,990	25,520	28%	2,760

While the proposed program is entirely online, many UT online students are from Tennessee and the surrounding states. Therefore, the job growth in this region matches the needs of our potential students in the future.

Employer Demand

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the economic impact of the U.S. Travel and tourism sector in 2023 contributed \$2.24TN to the U.S. economy, surpassing the 2019 pre-pandemic peak of \$2.17TN. By 2033, WTTC forecasted that the Tourism and travel sector will contribute more than \$3TN to the U.S. economy, translating to 10% of the U.S. economy and 21MN jobs, one in eight Americans working in this sector.¹²

A master's degree and work experience in the industry provides graduates with a distinct advantage when pursuing managerial positions and heavily analytical roles. Some exemplary directions the graduates can take include general and operations managers, market research analysts, buyers and purchasing agents, food service managers, lodging managers, and entertainment and recreation managers. According to the Lightcast Report in 2024, all these positions had a strong median pay in 2022 and are all predicted to rapidly grow in the seven years following the program's proposed launch time nationwide, Fall 2025 (Table 10).

Table 10.

National Occupational Outlook Data

Occupational Title	2022 Jobs	Annual Openings	Median Earnings	Growth (2022-2032)
General and Operations Managers	460,965	44,898	\$47.00/hr	+12.79%
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	207,423	25,398	\$32.60/hr	+22.14%
Buyers and Purchasing Agents	47,400	4,547	\$32.24/hr	+1.43%
Food Service Managers	13,894	1,831	\$27.44/hr	+12.87%
Lodging Managers	5,173	618	\$28.54/hr	+11.92%
Entertainment and Recreation Managers, Except for Gambling	3,983	540	\$31.22/hr	+18.93%

¹² World Travel & Tourism Council: <https://wttc.org/news-article/us-travel-and-tourism-sector-set-to-reach-record-breaking-high-this-year-says-wttc>

Community and Industry Partnerships

The Department of RHTM is deeply committed to fostering robust connections with industry leaders and organizations, ensuring our programs remain at the forefront of industry needs and trends. Our directory board comprises diverse retail, hospitality, and tourism businesses.

Within the retail sector, our advisory board includes major retail chains such as Belk, as well as unique yet nationally recognized entities like Pilot Flying J, Tractor Supply Company, and Cracker Barrel Old Country Store. We are privileged to count InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), McKibbin Hotel Management, and Blackberry Farm among our esteemed partners in hospitality and tourism. Collaborative efforts with Jack Daniel Distillery, Texas Roadhouse, and Connor Concepts have proven invaluable in the food and beverage industry. Furthermore, we are closely connected with Visit Knoxville and Nashville Convention Center for destination marketing and event management.

The RHTM faculty convenes with the advisory board every semester to deliberate on emerging industry trends and strategies for enhancing educational quality. These discussions encompass various facets, including recruitment plans, curriculum development, and avenues for students' career advancement. Leveraging the wealth of expertise within our advisory board, we continuously refine our undergraduate curriculum, which we aim to replicate in our forthcoming master's program. Several advisory board members have actively participated in teaching or guest lecturing our undergraduate courses, exemplifying their commitment to nurturing the next generation of industry professionals. This engagement is poised to extend into the development of master's level courses.

In addition to our advisory board, RHTM collaborates with a spectrum of organizations to expand students' professional networks. For example, as mentioned earlier in this proposal, the Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association, Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association, Greater Nashville Hospitality Association, Sevier County Hospitality and Tourism Association, and Visit Chattanooga Tourism Authority helped us distribute the survey to understand professionals' interests in this proposed program. They will continue to play a pivotal role in promoting and supporting the master's program's launch. Moreover, our collaboration with the Southern Hospitality Internship Program (SHIP) has enabled students to forge meaningful connections with businesses in Sevier County. The SHIP program told us they can help master students customize their internship.

Beyond advisory board involvement, our industry partners have generously contributed to the department's student enrichment fund, which supports experiential learning opportunities such as field trips and scholarships. Such support is anticipated to continue and can be used to establish scholarship opportunities explicitly tailored for master's students.

For more details from our industry partners, see the Letter of Support in Appendix A. The letters are from senior representatives of the following organizations:

1. Avery Dennison, Erica Redd, Commercial Development Lead North America
2. Connor Concepts, Brian Keyes, Senior VP Operations and Information Technology & Education Director
3. Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association, Jill Thompson, Executive Director
4. McKibbin Hospitality, Ashley Dixon, Director of Talent Acquisition & Retention
5. Southern Hospitality Internship Program, Luke Fall, Recruiter
6. VolShop, Brian Wright, Director at VolShop

Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Our goal for graduation is to reach 45 graduates by year five (See Table 11). This projection is based on the results of the Student Interest surveys reported in Section III Feasibility Study and the Lightcast's report. According to the survey completed by professionals, 330 participants indicated they would apply to this program in one to two years, and another 169 participants reported that they would apply in three to four years. Assuming 10% of these individuals take action, we anticipate enrolling 30 new students in the first year, and this number will grow to 50 by year five. Additionally, according to Lightcast's report, the average number of graduates from an online master's program in retail, hospitality, and tourism management was 39 in the U.S. in 2022. Therefore, the enrollment level projected is reachable.

The 4+1 accelerated program will be built after the regular program is launched. Based on the undergraduate student interest survey, we anticipate that five students will enroll in the 4+1 accelerated program. The number of students enrolled in the 4+1 accelerated program is tied to the size of our undergraduate program. Therefore, it may reach five students yearly and remain at this level. This group has the potential to grow if the undergraduate program is enlarged.

The number of students enrolled and continued each year is calculated assuming the students in the 4+1 accelerated program will graduate in one year, and the other students will finish in two years. According to UT Digital Learning, the attrition rate is predicted to be 10%. Eventually, the number of graduates annually will reach 45 by year five.

Table 11.

Projected Enrollment and Graduates

Year	Academic	Incoming		Continue	Projected Total Enrollment	Projected Attrition (10% per year)	Projected Graduates
		2 Years	4+1				
1	2025-26	30	0	0	30	3	0
2	2026-27	30	0	27	57	6	24
3	2027-28	35	3	27	65	7	27
4	2028-29	35	4	31	70	7	31
5	2029-30	40	5	31	76	8	32

Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

The breakdown of the projected costs is reported in Appendix B: THEC Financial Projection Form.

Faculty and Instructional Staff

A total of \$56,653 (\$45,000 + \$11,653) for the planning year and \$11,883 for Year 1 is budgeted for the program director and course development. The department leadership will seek grant opportunities to compensate instructional staff who develop new courses beyond their assigned workload. Below are more specific explanations about faculty and instructional staff needs and related expenses.

(1) Program Director

A current faculty member in RHTM will assume responsibilities for the Graduate Program Director role to manage the program, including recruiting, advising, and organizing the program throughout the year. The annual cost for the Online Master's Program Director (OMPD) will be \$4,000 as a yearly stipend. In addition, the OMPD will be given a summer salary equivalent to one month of base salary to cover administrative activities during summer. The stipend (\$4,000) and the summer salaries for OMPD, including the annual market increase (3%) and the increase due to promotion to Clinical Associate Professor in Year 2 (10%), are included in the Financial Projection Form.

(2) Course Development

At least nine courses will be developed to support the program in the early years. The faculty will continue developing new courses as enrollment and program capacity increase. A grant from UTK Digital Learning has been secured in the summer of 2024 (\$20,000) to develop the first four courses. Additional opportunities will be pursued to compensate instructional faculty for developing quality courses. We aim to secure an additional \$25,000 to develop five additional courses during the planning year.

(3) Additional Faculty Hire for Increased Instructional Need

Based on the enrollment projection and revenue potential, the program will be able to search for one tenure-track faculty in Year 3 to be hired for Year 4 and beyond. Because this faculty will not support only the online master's program, the additional faculty's salary is not included in the Financial Projection Form.

Non-Instructional Staff

In the planning year, we projected to recruit 30 students. Hence, we anticipate a 25% increase in needed administrative staff support to communicate with applicants, answer general non-academic questions about the program, assist marketing efforts, and support the admission processes.

Once the program becomes active, we anticipate that 50% of administrative staff support will be needed to continue with the tasks described above and assist with the non-academic needs of enrolled students. As we project the number of students in each cohort increases, the tasks required to communicate with prospective students and to provide services for enrolled students will continue, requiring at least 50% of full-time equivalent (FTE) for administrative staff.

Based on current administrative staff salary in the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (~\$50,000), \$12,500 (25% FTE) and \$25,000 (50% FTE) are assessed. During the planning year, the department will utilize the Career Gateway System to supplement 10 hours a week (25% FTE) without benefit calculations. Once the program is launched (Fall 2025), the 50% FTE staff compensations will include appropriate benefits, according to the fringe benefit rate for staff, 41.51%. The Department will hire either part-time staff specifically for the M.S. in the RHTM program or full-time staff with additional administrative duties (50%) and administrative support for the M.S. program. After the first year, an incremental 3% increase in staff salary is calculated.

Graduate Assistants

We do not anticipate additional spending on hiring graduate assistants, given that the courses are at the master's level and the class size will be relatively small.

Accreditation

We do not anticipate additional spending on accreditation as industry-specific accreditation is not available for the proposed program.

Consultants

We do not anticipate recurring consultations for the program. As part of the THEC approval process, an external reviewer will be invited in the planning year, and an honorarium of \$1,000 will be paid to the reviewer. Hence, the one-time cost is estimated at \$1,000.

Equipment

Given that the program will be entirely online, we do not anticipate additional spending on equipment. UT Digital Learning will provide the equipment needed to produce online courses.

Information Technology

We do not anticipate additional spending on Information Technology. All the course materials will be hosted on Canvas and provided by UTK.

Library Resources

We do not anticipate additional spending on library acquisitions.

Marketing

The program is anticipated to spend \$8,000 each year on marketing. This will cover the cost of raising awareness through advertising, email marketing, print materials, etc. Once prospective students and alumni's contact information is collected and stored, a customer relationship management platform will be needed to maintain connections with prospective students and alumni.

Facilities

We do not anticipate additional spending on facilities.

Travel

To promote the program, we plan to spend \$3,000 per year traveling throughout Tennessee and surrounding states to attend professional association conferences and rent booths. As we anticipate inflation to these expenses, the travel budget is increased by \$500 every two years.

Other Resources

No other resources are needed for the program development and operation.

Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program

The breakdown of the projected revenue is reported in Appendix B: THEC Financial Projection Form.

Tuition

The tuition allocated to the department is projected to grow from \$229,500 in year one to \$663,000 by year five (See Table 12). The projection was based on the following assumptions: (1) 2-year students will take 18 credits in their first year and 12 credits in their second year; (2) 4+1 accelerated program students will take 24 credits and complete the program in one year; (3) in-state tuition (\$425 per credit) is used for the prediction to counter attrition and credit awarding¹³.

Table 12. Projected Tuition Revenue by Academic Year

Year	Incoming 2-year student	Fall and Spring 18 credits	Continuing 2-year Students	Fall 12 Credits	4+1 students	4+1 24 credits	Total Annual Tuition
2025-26	30	\$229,500	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$229,500
2026-27	30	\$229,500	27	\$137,700	0	\$0	\$367,200
2027-28	35	\$267,750	27	\$137,700	3	\$30,600	\$436,050
2028-29	35	\$267,750	31	\$158,100	4	\$40,800	\$466,650
2029-30	40	\$306,000	31	\$158,100	5	\$51,000	\$515,100

Grants

UT Digital Learning will provide course development funding (\$5,000 per course). Nine new courses will involve heavy video production and online setup, requiring course development funding. UT Digital Learning anticipates providing \$45,000 to support course development and production. In the Summer of 2024, the department received \$20,000 from Digital Learning to develop four online courses. The department will seek additional funding to develop five courses in AY 2025. If the grant funding from UT Digital Learning is unavailable, the Department Head will use other funding sources to continue developing courses. Potential funding sources include salary savings, facilities and administrative funding (F&A) from grants, and foundation accounts designated for general departmental needs.

Other

None

¹³ Students who have extensive work experience can be awarded up to six credits.

Appendix A: Letters of Support



March 28, 2024
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

**Materials Group —
North America**
8080 Norton Parkway
Mentor, Ohio 44060
Phone 440 534-6000

To Whom It May Concern,

As both an alumnus and adjunct faculty member of UT, I take great pride in endorsing the new master's program proposed by the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism. I received a bachelor's degree in Retail and Consumer Science from UT in 2015 and joined the faculty in 2023.

Currently, I am instructing courses such as Introduction to the Fashion Industry and RMM 421 Global Sourcing. While the fashion course is new, over 100 students enrolled in Introduction to the Fashion Industry in the Spring 2024 semester alone, which underscores the relevance and importance of these offerings. As a specialist in sustainability within the fashion industry, I am heartened by the increasing awareness and concern among our students regarding environmental issues. It is inspiring to witness the dedication of the younger generation to effecting positive change in this field.

Moreover, I am deeply impressed by the diverse research interests of my colleagues within the department. Their expertise provides invaluable support for prospective masters students, enabling them to delve into specific areas and challenges within the realms of retail and hospitality.

Reflecting on my own educational journey, I recognize the significance of advanced degrees in unlocking opportunities for career advancement. After receiving my bachelor's degree from UT in 2015, I pursued a master's degree from another university in 2016. The absence of a masters program with a concentration in retailing during my time as an undergraduate was a missed opportunity for UT. I am thrilled that UT is now poised to fill this gap and provide students with the tools and knowledge needed to excel in the competitive field of retailing.

I am excited to see the proactive strides taken by RHTM in advancing its academic offerings. Given the program's potential to empower students and contribute to the growth of our industry, I strongly endorse its approval by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erica Redd'.

Erica Redd
Commercial Development Lead North America, Avery Dennison
Adjunct Instructor of Retail and Merchandising Management



Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

May 4th, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the University of Tennessee's proposed online Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management. As the Senior Vice President of Operations and Information Technology & Education Director for Connor Concepts, I am intimately familiar with the needs and potential of the hospitality industry. Connor Concepts is a leading restaurant group originating in Knoxville and now spans 17 locations across the Southeast.

Having served on the advisory board of the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (RHTM) for many years, and having taught senior-level undergraduate courses at RHTM focusing on the food and beverage industry, I have witnessed firsthand the caliber and ambition of the students within this program. It is evident that there is a demand for advanced education in the hospitality sector, and we at Connor Concepts are actively seeking graduate students with heightened expertise in this field.

One particular note is the program's flexible format, catering to professionals seeking career advancement while balancing work commitments. Connor Concepts is eager to engage with this innovative learning platform. As an industry partner, we are prepared to contribute by recording interview videos, participating in guest speaker sessions, and joining online panels and virtual career fairs to provide invaluable insights and networking opportunities for future students.

In summary, I wholeheartedly endorse the online Master's Degree in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management and urge the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to approve the program. This initiative is not only timely but also essential for the advancement of Tennessee's key industries, namely retail and hospitality.

Warm regards,

Brian Keyes

Senior VP Information Technology & Education
Connor Concepts, Inc.

connorconcepts.com



Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association
PO Box 239 Knoxville, TN 37901
gkha@gkhhospitality.org 865.567.6325

March 25, 2024

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

To Whom It May Concern,

I am thrilled to express my wholehearted support for the development of the new online Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management proposed by the Department of Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Management (RHTM) at the University of Tennessee. As the Executive Director of the Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association, I am deeply involved in connecting hotel/motels, restaurants, venues, attractions, and services and suppliers to the hospitality and tourism industries in the greater Knoxville area.

In the over 15 years that I have served on the RHTM advisory board, I have had the privilege of witnessing the evolution of their undergraduate curriculum which features experiential learning and provides students with well-rounded knowledge of the hospitality and tourism industry. Given the rapid expansion of the hospitality and tourism sector in Tennessee, the introduction of this new program is both timely and imperative to sustain and enhance our state's economic vitality.

I have actively participated in the distribution of the proposed program Professional Interest Survey and the results clearly revealed the pressing demand for such a program. Notably, half of the participants expressed a strong interest in applying to the proposed program, highlighting its relevance and appeal within the industry.

It is evident from the survey that prospective students are eager to gain insights into industry trends, hone analytical skills and establish invaluable networking connections. The Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association can facilitate these connections by providing students with access to industry leaders and assisting RHTM in promoting the program to professionals seeking career advancement opportunities.

In conclusion, I offer my unwavering support for this program and would ask the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to grant approval. The online Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Management holds immense promise in equipping aspiring professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in our dynamic hospitality and tourism industry.

Sincerely,

Jill Thompson
Executive Director
Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association



Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

March 22, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am honored to lend my support to the University of Tennessee's endeavor to launch an online Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management program. McKibbon Hospitality is a prominent hotel development and management company overseeing 112 properties across 46 destinations, five of which are in Knoxville, TN. As the Director of Talent Acquisition & Retention at McKibbon Hospitality, I am keenly aware of the growing demand for exceptional talent in the hospitality industry.

At McKibbon, we have implemented successful training programs that immerse hospitality students in the operational aspects of the business and expose them to executive-level decision-making processes. I believe there is immense potential for synergy between our training programs and the proposed master's program, offering students the opportunity to develop advanced leadership and analytical skills essential for success in the industry.

I have enjoyed interacting with the hospitality and tourism students at UTK through guest lecturing for fifteen years. I have also joined the advisory board of the department and witnessed firsthand the department's commitment to excellence. RHTM provides plenty of hands-on learning opportunities such as the Blissful Wish Wedding, STR Student Market Research Competition, and Ready for the World Café. Beyond student experiences, the active engagement of faculty in research underscores the department's dedication to staying at the forefront of the field. It is evident that the department is fully equipped to deliver a high-quality master's degree.

In conclusion, the addition of a Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, particularly in an online format, represents a forward-thinking development for UTK. I give my fullest support and recommend the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to approve this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley Dixon".

Ashley Dixon
Director of Talent Acquisition & Retention
McKibbon Hospitality



Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

March 25, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the new master's degree program in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), drawing from my experiences as an alumnus and professional in the field.

As a proud graduate of UTK, having earned my degree in 2021, I have remained closely connected to the Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management (RHTM) department. In my current role as a recruiter at the Southern Hospitality Internship Program, I have had the privilege of collaborating with RHTM, facilitating internship opportunities and fostering connections between students and industry leaders.

Our partnership has allowed us to provide UT hospitality and tourism students with invaluable hands-on experiences through field trips to local businesses and networking events with key stakeholders. I firmly believe that extending this collaboration to support the new master's program is a natural progression, aligning with our shared commitment to preparing students for success in the industry.

At the Southern Hospitality Internship Program, we recognize the evolving needs of both students seeking advanced positions and employers searching for qualified candidates. To this end, we have already begun offering internship positions tailored for master's students, such as the Dollywood business analytics internship and Top Concepts Management Company's manager-in-training programs. Furthermore, we are fully committed to facilitating customized internship experiences for prospective RHTM master's students, connecting them with reputable employers to enhance their professional development.

On a personal note, I am eager to enroll in this new master's degree program. I believe it will serve as a catalyst for enhancing my analytical and leadership abilities, while also potentially paving the way for future opportunities to teach at the college level. With these considerations in mind, I offer my wholehearted endorsement and support for the establishment of this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luke Fall".

Luke Fall
Southern Hospitality Internship Program (SHIP)
Recruiter

www.southernhospitalityinternshipprogram.com
321 Court Avenue, Sevierville, TN 37862

March 27, 2024

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

To Whom It May Concern,

I am thrilled to learn about the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management's (RHTM) upcoming master's program. This initiative promises significant contributions to both the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), and the retail industry at large.

I have over 30 years of experience in the retail industry, I currently serve as the Director of VolShop, the official campus store of UTK. I enjoy the collaboration we have with RHTM on various projects benefiting students. I have worked closely with Dr. Michelle Childs to develop projects for students enrolled in RMM 410 Retail Strategic Planning, a milestone course for Retail, and Merchandising Management majors. The creativity and problem-solving skills demonstrated by these students has been truly remarkable. Additionally, my collaboration with Dr. Sejin Ha and her classes on space planning within the store has been invaluable. Beyond these engagements, my regular attendance at RHTM's advisory board meetings has allowed me to witness firsthand the department's impressive growth in recent years.

While the new program will be delivered fully online, I recognize the importance of providing students with hands-on experiences. The VolShop stands ready to support these students, particularly those enrolled in the "4+1 program." By offering on-campus opportunities, we ensure accessibility for all students, eliminating the need for relocation and commuting, especially during the "4+1 program."

I am confident that RHTM is taking the right approach in designing the Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management program. I applaud the university's commitment to aligning scholarly pursuits with industry needs and sincerely support this program.

Sincerely,



Brian Wright
Director at VolShop

Big Orange. Big Ideas.

Appendix B: THEC Financial Projection Form

 THEC Financial Projections Form								
Institution	University of Tennessee, Knoxville							
Program Name	Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management							
Projected One-Time Expenditures								
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6*	Year 7*
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$45,000							
Non-Instructional Staff								
Graduate Assistants								
Accreditation								
Consultants	\$1,000							
Equipment								
Information Technology								
Library resources								
Marketing								
Facilities								
Travel								
Other								
Total One-Time Expenditures	\$46,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Projected Recurring Expenditures								
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6*	Year 7*
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$11,653	\$11,883	\$12,671	\$12,931	\$13,199	\$13,475		
Non-Instructional Staff	\$12,500	\$35,378	\$36,439	\$37,532	\$38,658	\$39,818		
Graduate Assistants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Accreditation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Consultants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Information Technology	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Library	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Marketing	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000		
Facilities	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Travel	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$4,000	\$4,000		
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Total Recurring Expenditures	\$35,153	\$58,260	\$60,610	\$61,963	\$63,857	\$65,293	\$0	\$0
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$81,153	\$58,260	\$60,610	\$61,963	\$63,857	\$65,293	\$0	\$0
Projected Revenue								
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6*	Year 7*
Tuition	\$0	\$229,500	\$367,200	\$436,050	\$466,650	\$515,100		
Grants	\$45,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Total Revenues	\$45,000	\$229,500	\$367,200	\$436,050	\$466,650	\$515,100	\$0	\$0

*Years 6 and 7 should only be included for doctoral programs