

Public Comment:
Aug 22 - Sept. 6, 2024

Letter of Notification (LON) - Abbreviated

Master of Science in Sustainability

College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Updated: August 22, 2024

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Section I: Overview

Program Information

Institution:	University of Tennessee Knoxville
College/School/Division:	College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies
Department:	College-wide
Title of Degree Program:	Master of Science in Sustainability
Degree Designation:	Master of Science (MS)
Concentrations:	Sustainable Business Practices Governance and Policy Ecological Sustainability Community Engagement and Social Justice Sustainable Development Urban Sustainability Sustainable Water Management Sustainable Technologies Climate Change and Adaptation
CIP Code:	30.3301
CIP Code Title:	Sustainability Studies
CIP Code Definition:	A program that focuses on the concept of sustainability from an interdisciplinary perspective. Includes instruction in sustainable development, environmental policies, ethics, ecology, landscape architecture, city and regional planning, economics, natural resources, sociology, and anthropology.

SOC Code/Title: 11-9121 -- Natural Sciences Managers
 19-1031 -- Conservation Scientists
 19-2041 -- Environmental Scientists and Specialists,
 Including Health
 19-3051-- Urban and Regional Planners
 19-3099 -- Social Scientists and Related Workers, All Other
 19-4042 -- Environmental Science and Protection
 Technicians, Including Health
 25-1053 -- Environmental Science Teachers, Postsecondary
 25-1199 -- Postsecondary Teachers, All Other

Proposed UT BOT Approval: February 2025

Proposed THEC Approval: May 2025

Proposed Implementation Date: August 2025

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, RESEARCH AND STUDENT SUCCESS

August 9, 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 (UTK), please accept this Letter of Notification (LON) for a proposed Master of Science in Sustainability. This program will be housed alongside several other new academic programs in the College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies (CECS). Students who graduate from the program will be prepared to meet the exponentially increasing demand for sustainability professionals in industry, academics, and government. Sustainability is commonly defined as “meeting today’s needs without harming the quality of life of future generations.” Sustainability skills require an extraordinary degree of interdisciplinary training. The program will provide an interdisciplinary curriculum that builds on the wide-ranging expertise of faculty across the university. As part of the program, students will complete nine credit hours across two concentrations in the following areas: (1) sustainable business practices, (2) governance and policy, (3) ecological sustainability, (4) community engagement and social justice, (5) sustainable development, (6) urban sustainability, (7) sustainable water management, (8) sustainable technologies, and (9) climate mitigation and adaptation. The UT System Office has reviewed the proposal and believes it offers a strong complement to the existing programs in the college. We look forward to hearing from THEC staff.

Sincerely,

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

CC: Donde Plowman
John Zomchick
Ozlem Kilic
Heather Hartman
Vandana Singh Avasty
Michael McKinney
Matt Matthews
Karen Galicia
Betty Dandridge Johnson

Campus Letter of Support



June 7, 2024

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

President Boyd:

Please accept the attached Letter of Notification for a new graduate degree, the Master of Science in Sustainability, in the College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies (CECS) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK).

The proposed program, Master of Science in Sustainability (SUST), is being developed to prepare students for meeting the rapidly increasing demand for sustainability professionals in industry, academia, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations. The SUST graduate program at CECS will be launched in Fall 2025 to provide an interdisciplinary curriculum that builds on the expertise of many faculty across the university. A core curriculum committee of 14 faculty members from 6 different colleges helped create and unanimously approved this degree.

Approved by the Board of Trustees in the spring of 2023, CECS is an interdisciplinary college created to host emerging, future-oriented interdisciplinary programs at UTK. Like the college's existing degree programs, including Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, and Innovative Transdisciplinary Studies, Sustainability will be a customizable degree that will provide enrolled students the opportunity to approach problems in sustainability in diverse disciplines in colleges across the Knoxville Campus. CECS is building this graduate degree on an existing Sustainable Development minor for undergraduate students. An undergraduate degree is being planned for launch in Fall 2026.

The two-year Sustainability MS degree is designed to offer a foundational understanding of sustainability concepts and specific skill sets that can be applied to many practical "real world" challenges facing society today. It will be a useful capstone curriculum for students with any undergraduate academic background, ranging from engineering, business, arts, and the sciences. The degree is very flexible, with applied concentrations that include sustainable business, policy and governance; sustainable technologies; economic development; urban sustainability; community engagement; and water management. The program will feature real-world applications across various disciplines.

The proposed Sustainability MS at UTK aligns seamlessly with the university's mission as a leading land-grant research institution. The program mirrors UTK's commitment to applied research and community engagement by emphasizing hands-on learning and community impact. It strengthens ties with strategic partners like the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, TVA, KUB, and Volkswagen. Furthermore, the program aligns with UTK's goal of preparing its graduates to be industry, government, and community leaders. Given the high demand for sustainability professionals, many of these graduates will likely remain in Tennessee, contributing to the state's growth. The program also readily fits within UTK's organizational structure, reinforcing its mission, partnerships, and vision for its graduates.

CECS is highly resourced to deliver the courses for SUST, with over 100 sustainability-related graduate courses already being taught. CECS instructors will provide instruction for the core courses for the SUST degree: SUST 501 (Sustainability Foundations & Perspectives), SUST 510 (Sustainability Reporting for Organizations), SUST 520 (Data Analysis and Problem-Solving for Sustainability), and SUST 599 (Internship/Research/Thesis). Graduate electives will be selected from existing offerings from multiple colleges on campus and CECS certificates.

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
527 Andy Holt Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996-0152
865-974-2443 865-974-4811 fax provost.utk.edu

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System

The campus administration fully supports this proposed program. At this time, we request transmission to THEC for approval. Please get in touch with me if you have any questions or need additional documentation.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John P. Zomchick
Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

cc: Donde Plowman
Bernie Savarese
Karen Galicia
Betty Dandridge Johnson
Ozlem Kilic
Vandana Singh
Heather Hartman

Section II: Background

Purpose and Nature of Academic Program

Background and Context of the Proposed Program

The College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies (CECS) engages students in emerging new fields of study, which are typically highly interdisciplinary and, therefore, do not fit in conventional colleges or departments on campus. By integrating offerings across campus (there are 900 different degree topics currently taught at UT), CECS aims to reduce the redundancy of the delivery of topics ranging from data science to sustainability. These topics are relevant to engineering, natural and social sciences, business, and agriculture, among others. UTK proposes a new Master of Science in Sustainability (SUST). Inspired by the success of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence in CECS, the SUST MS will mirror these programs' design by enabling students across the university to take topics relevant to their interests and future careers in a classroom setting that includes a variety of student backgrounds and interests. CECS currently has an existing undergraduate Sustainable Development certificate approved to launch in Fall 2024¹UTK also offers a popular undergraduate B.A. in Sustainability through the Department of Geography and Sustainability. This Sustainability B.A. graduates many students interested in pursuing a graduate degree in Sustainability (See Appendix A). The proposed M.S. in Sustainability will thus help meet the demand for such a degree.

Rooted in an environment that celebrates interdisciplinary instruction and collaboration, the SUST program operates alongside other forward-thinking CECS majors like Data Science and Applied Artificial Intelligence. This setup fosters a rich, collaborative intellectual environment where students, regardless of their major, can delve into sustainability applications and related skills across diverse fields such as social sciences, natural sciences, business, and communications. CECS offers a dedicated drop-by advising office to ensure consistent guidance and support. It assists students in course planning, internship placements, and bespoke career advice, ensuring their educational journey seamlessly aligns with their future professional aspirations. The proposed SUST program in CECS aims to produce graduates equipped with a blend of technical prowess and interdisciplinary acumen, ready to navigate and influence the rapidly emerging field of sustainability, which permeates many facets of global society.

Program Purpose

The Master of Science in Sustainability (SUST) will prepare students to meet the exponentially increasing demand for sustainability professionals in industry, academics, and government. Sustainability is commonly defined as “meeting today’s needs without harming the quality of life of future generations.” Sustainability skills require an extraordinary degree of interdisciplinary training. The SUST graduate program in the College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies (CECS) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), will provide an interdisciplinary curriculum that builds on

¹ The Sustainable Development Goals Certificate has already been submitted to THEC and will be active August 1, 2024.

the wide-ranging expertise of faculty across the university. The proposed SUST MS degree was created by a SUST Curriculum Committee of 14 faculty members who teach sustainability-related courses and represent seven colleges and academic units. This SUST Curriculum Committee has included two faculty from the B.A. Sustainability Program in Geography, including the Director of the Sustainability Major. Both faculty members have contributed to creating and approving the framework for this M.S. in Sustainability. Their Department Head has also approved. The idea is that the M.S. supplements rather than competes with the B.A.

Program Design and Delivery

The two-year Sustainability (SUST) MS degree program will offer a foundational understanding of sustainability concepts, data sources, and tools in a way that is not currently available on the UTK campus. This program accentuates real-world applications across various disciplines and will delve into the methods and components of sustainability solutions to focus on practical skills that provide social and technological solutions to sustainability challenges. The SUST degree program will be completed by earning 30 credit hours, as required for any master's degree at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Of the 30 credit hours, twelve will be CECS core courses taught by CECS full-time faculty and CECS Faculty Fellows appointed from across disciplines at UTK. Additionally, students will complete nine credit hours in each of two concentrations from this list of 9 concentrations: (1) sustainable business practices, (2) governance and policy, (3) ecological sustainability, (4) community engagement and social justice, (5) sustainable development, (6) urban sustainability, (7) sustainable water management, (8) sustainable technologies, and (9) climate mitigation and adaptation. These courses will be taught by CECS full-time faculty and CECS Faculty Fellows appointed from across disciplines in many departments at UTK. The program will be taught hybrid with a combination of online and face-to-face courses.

Target Audience

The target audience for the proposed program is multifaceted, reflecting the dynamic nature of today's academic and professional landscapes. One significant demographic includes highly focused and motivated students who have recently received their bachelor's degree and are eager to harness the potential of emerging fields such as sustainability for specific career trajectories, aiming to be at the forefront of the workforce after graduation. Our collaboration with the Center for Career Development's advising team and esteemed industry partners ensures these students can optimize their credit hours toward gainful employment. Another significant demographic includes established career professionals who wish to enhance their academic credentials by seeking a graduate degree in sustainability. This consists of a large target audience in industry and government employed in environmental and energy fields where sustainability is emerging as a critical area of concern. Examples of this audience would include Oak Ridge National Lab and many associated environmental consulting companies.

Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission

State Master Plan²

UT Knoxville has the highest graduation and first-to-second-year retention rates among the state's public institutions and has developed innovative programs and support structures to help students thrive in and out of the classroom. As a doctoral university holding the highest Carnegie classification for research activity and designated as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution, UT Knoxville allows students to learn from faculty at the forefront of their fields.

The SUST program will expand the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's innovation, customization, and quality education mission. Through internship placements, research courses, and capstone projects, SUST students can conduct real-world research that affects their communities and allows them to work alongside faculty in campus laboratories and the field. Finally, the proposed program is focused on educating a STEM-trained and highly skilled workforce that is in high demand in our state and is a goal of the state Master Plan.

Institutional Mission

Importantly, this program aligns directly with The University of Tennessee, Knoxville mission, which states:

We are a diverse community with a shared commitment to discovery, creativity, learning, and engagement. At UT Knoxville, we: Empower learners of all ages and backgrounds to achieve their dreams through accessible and affordable education and state-of-the-art research training opportunities. Advance the prosperity, well-being, and vitality of communities across Tennessee and around the world through our research, teaching, service, and engagement. Commit to excellence, equity, and inclusion within the university, across the state, and in all our global activities.

The proposed Sustainability program at UTK aligns seamlessly with the university's mission as a leading land-grant research institution. The program mirrors UTK's commitment to applied research and community engagement by emphasizing hands-on learning and community impact. It strengthens ties with strategic partners like the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, driving innovation in intelligent machines and society. Furthermore, the program aligns with UTK's goal of preparing its graduates to be industry, government, and community leaders. Given the high demand for sustainability professionals, many of these graduates will likely remain in Tennessee, contributing to the state's growth. The sustainability program fits seamlessly within UTK's organizational structure, reinforcing its mission, partnerships, and vision for its graduates.

Moreover, the proposed SUST program aligns with UTK's organizational structure and overall mission as a state's flagship land-grant research institution. The program adds to the portfolio of UTK's forward-thinking academic offerings, reflecting its commitment to staying at the forefront of

² <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thec/bureau/research/other-research/master-plan/finalmp.pdf>

technology and innovation. The cross-disciplinary nature of the SUST program would encourage collaboration among various academic departments, leveraging the strength of over 1,800 full-time faculty members across diverse fields.

The applied nature of this program aligns with UTK's dedication to hands-on coursework and real-world research experiences. Students would be able to conduct research and develop solutions that directly impact their communities, echoing the university's commitment to community engagement. Furthermore, the program will complement UTK's partnerships with entities like the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, supporting the drive for innovation in critical fields such as sustainable energy technologies, intelligent machines, and society. With its establishment, the Sustainability program could contribute to UTK's standing as a top institution for research activity and community engagement. The Sustainability program aligns with UTK's goal to equip its graduates to become industry, government, and community leaders, particularly in the growing environmental and sustainability sector. With the high demand for environmental and sustainability professionals, many of these graduates will likely remain in Tennessee, fulfilling UTK's vision of giving back to the state through its alumni. The proposed program integrates seamlessly into UTK's organizational structure, supporting and enhancing its mission, vision, and strategic partnerships.

Institutional Capacity to Deliver the Proposed Program

The CECS SUST program will increase the overall impact of UT Knoxville by catalyzing innovative, intercollegiate graduate courses, stackable certificates, and minors. CECS has developed a straightforward rubric for revenue sharing via student credit hour (SCH) allocation, given that UTK now uses a budget allocation model (BAM) under which colleges manage their revenues and expenditures. The basic model is that 80% of the SCH goes to the college teaching the course, with 20% going to the student's home college. Students majoring in the program would be CECS students, so when they take a gateway course such as SUST 501, CECS keeps 100% of the SCH. When students from other colleges take SUST 501, CECS retains 80% of the SCH; when CECS students take electives in other colleges, those colleges retain 80% of the SCH. It is a simple and effective resource allocation model.

CECS supports sustainability in this program at multiple levels. CECS is hiring a half-time (0.5) lecturer to support the CECS courses this upcoming year in the Sustainability program. One full-time lecturer teaches up to eight courses per year. The Program Directors and Program Coordinators, appointed by CECS, oversee the curriculum and enrollment, course scheduling, assessment, accreditation, capstone, and research course contents. The Program Directors collaborate with the faculty across UTK to develop and approve new certifications and minors. The CECS Director of Marketing oversees advertising, outreach, and prospective student recruitment. The CECS Director of Advising oversees the advising of all CECS majors in their degree program operations. The Director of Partnerships and Economic Development will also engage campus, community, and industry partners to support experiential learning in the program, fostering pathways to student employment.

The curriculum is supported by a campus-wide curriculum committee that works with the CECS Program Director and CECS-appointed Faculty Fellow as the lead. As noted above, this SUST MS degree was created by a SUST Curriculum Committee of 14 faculty members who teach sustainability-related courses and represent seven colleges and academic units. The committee will continually develop and manage the curriculum, update the courses, and select relevant elective courses from across the university. This approach demonstrates the collaborative structure of all CECS academic programs.

Accreditation

Like all academic programs at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, the graduate degree in Sustainability will be regionally accredited by SACSCOC (<https://sacs.utk.edu/>).³

Currently, there is no programmatic accreditation agency for academic programs in sustainability. The proposed Master of Science in Sustainability program will participate in the program review in the 2030-35 Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) program. Since the proposed program will enroll students in August 2025, the program will be classified as a new program and may be exempt from the 2025-30 QAF cycle.

Existing Programs Offered at TN Institutions

In our research to identify existing programs offered at TN institutions, we reviewed all public and private universities and colleges in Tennessee. We found only two programs at two universities offering graduate-level degrees or sustainability certificates. As detailed below, Austin Peay University offers only a graduate certificate, while Lipscomb University offers an MS in Sustainability as well as a certificate.

Program CIP Codes

Both existing sustainability programs fall under CIP Code 30.3301. The proposed Sustainability degree differs from the Austin Peay program because we will offer a full MS degree, whereas they offer only a certificate. While the Lipscomb program does offer an MS degree, the UTK MS degree is far larger in scope, with nine concentrations and a much larger set of faculty and course offerings. As UTK is the flagship and R1 state university, we have many more resources for such a broad

³ The campus SACSCOC Liaison, Heather Hartman, is aware the program is being proposed. According to SACSCOC, if 25-49% of the credit hours are new, the institution is required to send SACSCOC a notification letter, which will take place once the LON has been reviewed and approved to move forward. For this MS, 12 hours are new courses in CECS and 18 are from current UT courses, so $12/30 = 40\%$.

interdisciplinary program. In addition, this MS degree will have an online-only option that will make it accessible to anyone in Tennessee. CECS also has a well-developed network of career-enhancing resources to facilitate internships and professional development opportunities. Given the extremely rapid growth of sustainability-related careers and training, there is a much greater demand for this degree than currently exists in Tennessee.

Table 1. *Comparable Programs at Other Institutions in Tennessee.*

This shows that there is only one MS degree program in the state of Tennessee (Lipscomb), and only one other school in the state has a Graduate Certificate in Sustainability. The MS program at Lipscomb, which is a relatively small school compared to UTK, has awarded between 7-16 degrees/year in the last 3 years with data.

Institution Name	Program Title and Degree Designation	CIP Code	Description/ Focus of Program	Degrees Awarded for 3 Years
Austin Peay University	Graduate Certificate in Sustainability	30.3301	Description from the website: “ The certificate in sustainability focuses on the capacity to balance the present needs of people, the economy, and the environment while protecting the needs of future generations. Students enrolled in this interdisciplinary program will examine ethical solutions to current and future environmental issues and solve issues related to sustainability”. Nine total hours of graduate coursework in Geography, Agriculture, and Sustainability. Suggested career opportunities include Environmental Compliance Inspectors and Environmental Science Operations.	The program was implemented in August 2019. Only one graduate for 2021-22.
Lipscomb University	MS and Graduate Certificate in Sustainability	30.3301	Description from the website: “With a sustainability degree from Lipscomb, you will be prepared to implement sustainable practices and lead others in environmentally-conscious initiatives. Our program provides you with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to make positive change in whatever career path you take.” Upon completion of this program, you will have the ability to: Develop foundational knowledge to pivot as sustainability changes Recognize technical applications and practices Justify the best technical applications and practices for your discipline Effectively communicate knowledge and applications Apply an application/practice to solve a problem within your discipline	– 2022: 16 2023: 7 2024: 9

Institution Name	Program Title and Degree Designation	CIP Code	Description/ Focus of Program	Degrees Awarded for 3 Years
			Coursework: - Professional Certificate (9 hrs) - Graduate Certificate (15 hrs) - MS (30 hrs) - MS/MBA Dual Degree (48 hrs) Suggested Careers: Natural Sciences, Business Operations, Engineers, Accountants, Managers (Natural Sciences, Business, Construction, Compliance)	
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Sustainability Bachelor of Arts (BA)	30.3301	From their website: The sustainability program engages students in a systems approach to solving pressing issues at the intersection of society, economics, and the environment. Topics studied include climate change, land-use change and biodiversity, water resources, natural resource management, and sustainable development at the local and global scales. Students develop a foundational knowledge of natural and social science with a skill set in geographic information systems, data analysis, communication, policy, and development.	2020-21: 13 2021-22: 15 2022-23: 11
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	Certificate in Sustainable Development	30.3301	The undergraduate certificate is intended for professionals and students interested in incorporating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into their current practice and skills. This certificate is intended to increase sustainable development competency both internationally and domestically and to prepare students for a career in private industry, the government, or a non-governmental organization.	The certificate will be implemented in fall 2024.

Section III: Feasibility Study

Local and Regional Workforce Needs/Demand

Sustainability jobs span various sectors (industry, academic, government, and private sector) and accordingly include various occupations. In determining alignment of academic programs with specific occupations, the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Crosswalk was used to determine alignment between the 33.3001 Sustainability CIP code and occupational codes. This match provided the following eight occupations for students interested in studying sustainability:

- 11-9121 -- Natural Sciences Managers
- 19-1031 -- Conservation Scientists
- 19-2041 -- Environmental Scientists and Specialists, Including Health
- 19-3051-- Urban and Regional Planners
- 19-3099 -- Social Scientists and Related Workers, All Other
- 19-4042 -- Environmental Science and Protection Technicians, Including Health
- 25-1053 -- Environmental Science Teachers, Postsecondary
- 25-1199 -- Postsecondary Teachers, All Other

Using the 33.3001 Sustainability Studies CIP code, the Lightcast Feasibility Study was conducted to assess local, regional, and employer demand. Lightcast is a labor market analytics firm that combines data from various sources such as IPEDS, Bureau of Labor Statistics, states' departments of labor, and other sources that provides a profile of occupations, industries, job postings, and other information for the specific CIP code.

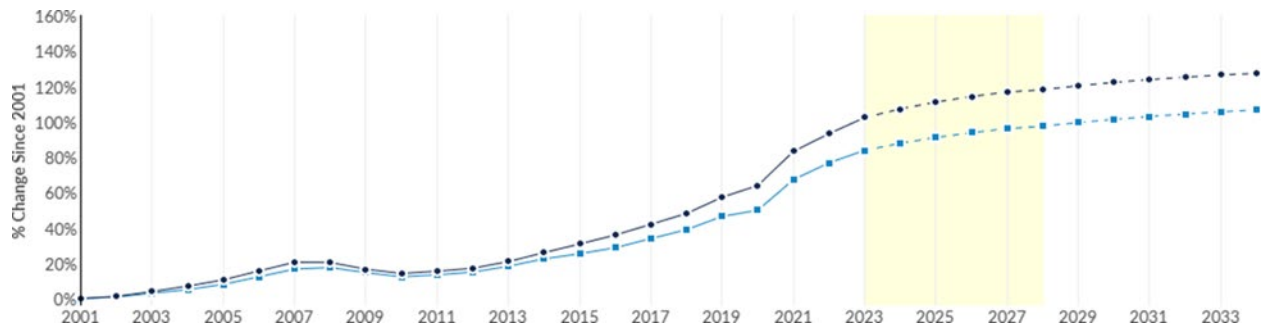
Anticipated Job Openings and Workforce Projections: 2023-2028

According to Lightcast, regional projections for sustainability jobs from 2023 to 2028 indicate a 7.8% increase, exceeding a 7.4% national increase. Overall, sustainability jobs are projected to exceed the regional demand in comparison to national projections.

Table 2. *Projected Sustainability Jobs: Region and Nation*

	2023 Jobs	2028 Jobs	# Change	% Change
Region	1,599,519	1,724,299	124,780	7.8%
Nation	6,329,516	6,800,101	470,585	7.4%

Figure 1. *Projected Increase in Sustainability Jobs Since 2001*



Sustainability jobs have been steadily increasing with regional jobs (black line) outpacing national jobs (blue line).

The forecast for sustainability occupations shows increasing growth rates in annual openings for some common sustainability jobs from 2023-2028. The largest number of annual openings are business-related (management, operations).

Table 3. *National Job Openings and Growth for Sustainability Occupations (Source: Lightcast)*

SOC Code and Occupation	2023 Jobs	Annual Openings	Growth (2023 - 2028)
13-1199 - Business Operations Specialists, All Other	58,568	6,103	+7.65%
13-1082 - Project Management Specialists	52,093	4,794	+9.70%
11-9199 - Managers, All Other	51,513	4,662	+7.67%
11-1011 - Chief Executives	18,029	1,390	+3.03%
13-1041 - Compliance Officers	17,450	1,636	+7.13%
19-4042- Environmental Scientists and Specialists, Including Health	6,226	601	+7.07%

Statewide and National Employment Opportunities for Sustainability Graduates

Lightcast reported that of the 78,700 job postings from June 2023-May 2024, over 32,600 were unique job postings for sustainability positions. Opportunities for sustainability studies graduates in the Southeastern US are higher in Virginia and Florida, lowest in Mississippi and West Virginia, and moderate in Tennessee (Figure 2 and Table 4). Of the ten top cities, Nashville, TN ranked seventh with 732 unique job postings of the 1,587 total job postings.

Figure 2. *Regional Job Postings (June 2023-May 2024).*

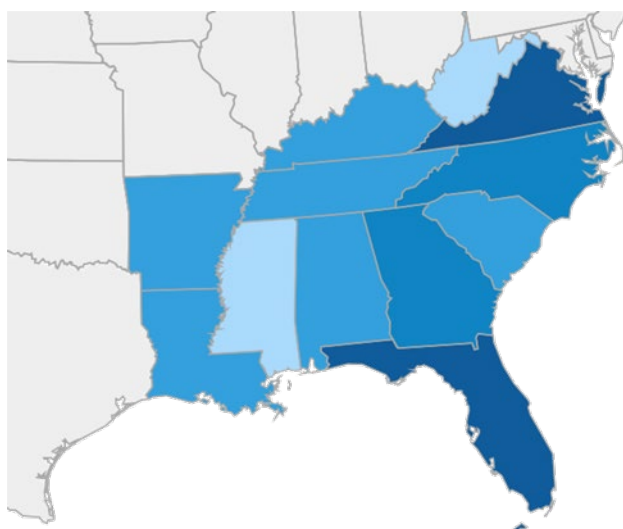


Table 4. *Unique Sustainability Job Postings in Selected States (Source: Lightcast)*

State	Unique Postings (Jun 2023 - May 2024)
Florida	7,168
Virginia	6,227
North Carolina	4,259
Georgia	4,039
Tennessee	2,335

Appendix A: Feasibility Study: Student Interest

Student Interest

Student survey at the University of Tennessee Knoxville

A survey of current undergraduate students at the University of Tennessee Knoxville indicated a strong interest in the Sustainability MS. *Nearly half* (47%) of respondents indicated a very strong (extremely likely) interest.

The survey was distributed between July 1 and July 25, 2024. As of July 25, 2024, 38 responses were received. This is a relatively low response rate (less than 10%) no doubt influenced by low student campus involvement during summer. We plan to keep the survey open and will update the results when we are invited to submit a New Academic Program Proposal.

It was a brief survey with just two questions (to maximize the response rate). Below are the questions and results.

Question 1

Table A1. *Likelihood of Enrolling in the Sustainability Program*. This survey was distributed to two undergraduate listservs: 1) Geology and Environmental Studies majors and 2) Sustainability majors. In addition, the survey was distributed to students enrolled in the summer section of Geography 345 (People and the Environment), Geography 331 (Natural Hazards), and Geography 341 (Urban Spaces).

If a Master of Science (MS) degree in sustainability that featured opportunities for multidisciplinary coursework was offered at UT, how interested would you be in enrolling in this program?	Percentage	Count N=38
Extremely likely	47%	18
Extremely unlikely	11%	4
Neither likely nor unlikely	42%	16

Question 2

Table A2. *Interest in Concentrations for the Proposed Sustainability Program.* This MS has nine concentrations to choose from. This survey examined the relative interest among students for each of the nine concentrations.

If an MS in Sustainability was available to you and offered a choice of concentrations, which concentration would interest you?	Not interested at all	Moderately interested	Extremely interested
Ecological Sustainability	2	14	22
Sustainable Water Management	5	12	21
Urban Sustainability	2	13	23
Community Engagement & Social Justice	9	15	14
Policy & Governance	10	14	14
Sustainable Technologies	2	24	12
Sustainable Development	1	10	27
Climate Mitigation and Adaptation	1	14	23
Sustainable Business Practices	8	14	12

These results are interesting and useful in curriculum planning as they indicate some concentrations (Sustainable Development, Climate Adaptation, Urban Sustainability) are noticeably more popular than others (Sustainable Business Practices, Sustainable Technologies, Policies & Governance). However, this is a relatively small sample size, and the survey pool of environmental and sustainability majors is undoubtedly a biased sample. Thus, more sampling is needed, including from a larger and more diverse sampling pool.