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HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
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TO: Mark Byrnes, University Provost
Middle Tennessee State University

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

SUBJECT: Middle Tennessee State University
Letter of Notification: Film and Television, Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

DATE: October 13, 2023

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

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

Attachment

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

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Letter of Notification Evaluation
October 13, 2023



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

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University	LON Submission Date: September 8, 2023
Academic Program, Degree Designation: Film and Television, MFA	
Concentration(s): N/A	
Proposed CIP Code and Title: 50.0602 Cinematography and Film/Video Production	
Proposed Implementation Date: May 2025	
Time Period Posted on Website for Public Comment: September 6-21, 2023	
Academic Program Liaison(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amy Aldridge Sanford, PhD, Vice Provost for Academic Programs, amy.aldridge.sanford@mtsu.edu 	

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

Letter of support from President/Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter of support dated August 29, 2023, sent from MTSU President McPhee was included.
Section II: Background	
Background on academic program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed program sets out to meet the workforce development demand of the current entertainment industry boom. In Tennessee, motion picture employment has grown 135 percent from 2013 to 2018. During the same time frame 7,300 new full-time equivalent Tennessee jobs were created resulting in \$655.6 million in economic output for the state. In April 2022, the Tennessee Entertainment Commission (TEC), in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Revenue and Department of Economic and Community Development, announced a franchise and excise (F&E) tax credit program to promote additional creation and economic development. Growth in film and television production has been especially pronounced in Middle Tennessee, including at Worldwide Stages in Spring Hill, TN, which has 320,000 square feet of production facilities, and in Nicole Kidman’s production company, Blossom Films.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MTSU's Department of Media Arts is the largest, longest running, and most comprehensive program for creative media production in the state and in the region. ▪ MTSU's B.S.in Video and Television shows consistent enrollment numbers since its inception in 2017 and will serve as a feeder into the proposed MFA program. ▪ The proposed program would be the first and only MFA in Film and Television at a public university in Tennessee.
<p>Purpose and nature of academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program is a 60-credit hour fully on ground program, aimed to develop advanced practitioners, provide additional training, skills, and practical application. ▪ The purpose of the MFA degree is to produce highly trained and skilled professionals to support the growing workforce demand for film and television workers. ▪ The proposed program will instruct students in nonfiction and fictional production through several areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Film theory and history ○ media aesthetics ○ film/video technology and equipment operation ○ film production ○ directing ○ editing ○ cinematography ○ sound for film/television ○ production crew roles and on-set protocol ○ media technologies ○ visual effects and motion design ○ multicamera production ○ LED video wall systems engineering and operation ○ virtual production ○ the planning and management of film and television productions.
<p>Alignment with State Master Plan and Institutional Mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The MFA in Film and Television works towards the THEC State Master Plan by anticipating the demand for highly skilled workers in the state's rapidly growing film and television industry. As stated in the Master Plan, "It is imperative for Tennessee's economy and the financial security of Tennesseans that higher education prepares its graduates for high-demand jobs. This is true for the current economy but is even more critical as we think about Tennessee's future economy. Higher education must work with industry leaders to identify the knowledge and skills that will best support Tennessee's economy, both today and tomorrow.1" (pg. 34). ▪ The proposed program will adhere to THEC State Master Plans goal to increase enrollment in majors that could result in majors leading to high-demand jobs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 2023 THEC Academic Supply and Occupation Demand Report data demonstrates strong future workforce demand in the areas of highly skilled film and television directors, producers, editors, and art directors, specifically centered in Northern Middle Tennessee, not far from the MTSU campus. ▪ The MFA in Film and Television also meets the needs of MTSU's institutional mission, which is focused on preparing graduates to "thrive in their chosen professions and a changing global society." The proposed program will help students develop the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to enter the marketplace and establish long-term careers.
<p>Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current Department of Media Arts will sufficiently support the proposed program. The department has the facilities and equipment necessary for a state-of-the-art MFA. ▪ Existing tenure-track and tenured faculty with graduate status will serve as the faculty for the MFA program, supplemented by specific courses taught by interdisciplinary faculty from the School of Journalism (documentary/journalism practice), the Department of Recording Industry (sound for film/tv), and faculty from the Department of English's Film Studies program (film theory and history). The Women's and Gender Studies program may also be involved. ▪ The university does not anticipate a new faculty line until year four of the proposal with two full time graduate assistants per cohort equaling six by the end of the proposal cycle.
<p>Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are no public institutions in Tennessee offering a graduate degree with the requested federal CIP code 50.0602. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Please add 3 year graduate data for the following programs to the listing:</i> ○ <i>University of Memphis, Communication, MA, concentration in Film and Video Production (09.0102)</i> ○ <i>East Tennessee State University, Film Production Graduate Certificate (50.0602)</i> ▪ Lipscomb University offers a 62-credit hour MFA in Film and Creative Media with a Film and Television/animation concentration. <i>Please provide 3 year graduation data for Lipscomb university.</i> ▪ No programs offer documentary production or live production as a concentration. The proposed program will offer virtual production currently not offered at any other program in Tennessee.
<p>Accreditation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program plans to pursue National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) accreditation. There are two other degree programs currently working on NASAD accreditation the B.S. in Photography, and the B.S. in Animation.
<p>Administrative Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This program will be housed in the Department of Media Arts in the College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The program director will be a tenured faculty member with graduate faculty status. The Program Director will report to the Department Chair of Media Arts.
Section III: Feasibility Study	
Student interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A survey was distributed to perspective students in March 2020 and again (with one additional question) in April 2023 through the Nashville Filmmakers Guild. ▪ The survey had 130 respondents of which 73 percent were between the ages of 18 and 24. ▪ Seventy-eight percent of 102 respondents indicated they would consider getting an MFA and 81 percent indicated they were willing to commit to the three years required to obtaining the degree. ▪ Sixty-nine percent of 107 respondents indicated they were willing to pay \$4,500 per semester to complete the degree. ▪ With the inclusion of financial aid/graduate assistantships, 97 percent of respondents indicated their willingness to pursue an MFA in Film and Television. ▪ A table on page 13 of the LON showcases specific areas of study found appealing to perspective students, with editing, digital technology, contemporary media, narrative, and marketing and delivery being “very important.”
Local and Regional Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Film and Television has noticeably expanded over the past 15 years particularly with the with the 2010s production of the ABC series <i>Nashville</i>. ▪ In the Nashville Business Journal, Bob Raines, the executive director of the Tennessee Entertainment Commission, states that there have been eight studio productions filmed in Tennessee since the 40 percent Film and Television tax credit incentive program was launched in 2022. ▪ An additional 25 percent grant was also codified by the state in 2022, aimed at independent productions under \$5 million. Right now, 95 percent of applicants for the 25 percent grant are Tennesseans creating original projects right here in the state. ▪ A city-wide Film Commission was created by Nashville’s Metro Council to bring additional film and television projects to Middle Tennessee. ▪ The Tennessee Entertainment Commission is a government entity has been charged with developing a sustainable film/tv industry in the state and is committed to creating an education pipeline to support industry growth. ▪ The Tennessee Entertainment Commission has reported the following statistics concerning the statewide demand for film and television professionals. Tennessee is currently 5th in the nation for employment in Motion Picture/Video Production, has seen 64 percent growth rate in Motion Picture/Video Production employment over last 10 years, 19 percent growth rate projected

	<p>over next decade in Motion Picture/Video Production employment, and \$424 million in annual Gross State Product produced by the Motion Picture/Video Production sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The MTSU Business and Economic Research Center (BERC) performed a feasibility study in May of 2022 with positive reaction to the occupations related to the proposed MFA. A full analysis is located on page 15-16 of the LON.
Employer Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The latest data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics projects an 8.8 percent increase of employment for producers and directors from 2021-2031. ▪ A tax credit signed by Governor Bill Lee in 2022 has resulted in a rise in the number of fully equipped film and television soundstages, primed for attracting major out-of-state studio productions as well as serving the needs of a growing statewide industry. ▪ A 47-acre film and television soundstage complex is currently being built in Hendersonville, TN with identical technology recently required at MTSU. This overlap anticipates a partnership forming between the campus and the complex stakeholders. ▪ Nationwide, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 17,500 job openings for Producers and Directors, 5700 job openings for film/video editors, and 3,700 job openings for camera operators with a current 270 jobs related to cinematography and Film/Video production in the state. ▪ The TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects a steady demand with 435 annual job openings in the field heavily focused in the middle Tennessee area.
Community and Industry Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters of support are provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Andy Van Roon - Founder/Chairman, FilmNashville Foundation (Film-Com) ○ Adam Sadler - Director of Business Development, Gear Seven ○ Lynda Evjen - President, Nashville Women in Film & Television ○ Bob Raines - Executive Director, Tennessee Entertainment Commission (Department of Economic and Community Development) ○ Nic Dugger - Founder, TNDV Television ○ Megan Hill - General Manager and Executive Producer, Vū Nashville ○ Tracy Rogers - Vice President and General Manager, WKRN News 2 Nashville ▪ Additional industry partners willing to invest one million dollars of new technology include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monolith Studios ○ Music City Studios

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arc Studios ○ Worldwide Stages ○ Numynd Studios ○ Made in Network ○ Skyway Studios ○ Hulu ○ ESPN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These letters and partnerships demonstrate strong support for the proposed program, pointing to the need for trained graduates with the key skills the program aims to cover, the rapidly evolving nature of the film and television industry, and a willingness to partner with MTSU to offer internships and mentoring. ▪ MTSU also anticipates several additional partnerships based on the geographic location and projected growth of middle Tennessee.
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Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Projected Enrollment and Graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program anticipates a three-year period to completion with an annual fall cohort of 15 students, increasing to 20 in year 4. 																														
	<table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Academic Year</th> <th>Projected Total Fall Enrollment</th> <th>Projected Attrition</th> <th>Projected Graduates</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2025-2026</td> <td>15</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2026-2027</td> <td>29</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>2027-2028</td> <td>42</td> <td>2</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>2028-2029</td> <td>46</td> <td>2</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>2029-2030</td> <td>51</td> <td>2</td> <td>13</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates	1	2025-2026	15	-	-	2	2026-2027	29	1	-	3	2027-2028	42	2	14	4	2028-2029	46	2	13	5	2029-2030	51	2	13
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Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver Proposed Program

Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No new faculty is initially anticipated. If enrollment projections are met, an additional faculty member will be added in year 3. A starting salary for a tenure-track Assistant Professor faculty member in this discipline would cost \$65,000/year plus \$24,050/year in benefits (37% of salary).
Non-Instructional Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One part time administrative assistant is anticipated in year 2. This position will cost \$20,000/year for a 12-month part-time contract, without benefits.
Graduate Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two graduate assistants will be added per year resulting in 6 graduate assistants at the end of the proposal cycle. The stipend is \$9,144 annually per GA. GAs will teach several introductory undergraduate courses. <i>Will the stipend include tuition remission and benefits?</i>
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The department will pursue NASAD accreditation with an approximate total cost of \$4306. <i>Please adjust the financial projects to reflect the cost outlined in the LON narrative.</i>
Consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed program will require one external reviewer with a one-time estimated cost of \$4,000.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consulting assistance from NASAD will be provided at the cost of \$1,800. <i>Is this cost in the planning year or in Year 1?</i>
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipment requests include new film making equipment with an initial cost of \$20,000 and a proposed annual upkeep cost of \$10,000-\$15,000.
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed program anticipates purchasing a Vimeo Pro Subscription at \$780 annually.
Library Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new library acquisitions will be required.
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A projected marketing cost of \$12,000 in the first year and \$2,000 each additional is expected to generate and sustain awareness of the program. <i>There are no marketing costs indicated in Year 1 in the Financial Projections Form. If costs are anticipated, please include them.</i>
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new facilities will be required for this program.
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel expenses are estimated to cost approximately \$5,000 per year.
Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Film Freeway Gold membership will be acquired at \$99 per year with an estimated \$500 for film entries.
Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program	
Tuition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is estimated that students will take an average of 10 CH a semester, at an annual in-state cost of \$12,360.
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grants are anticipated to fund this program.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No other revenue is anticipated at this time.
Appendices	
Letters of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFA in Independent Film and Television Feasibility Study Letters of support for the proposed program were received with a list provided above.
THEC Financial Projections Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Projections Form provided in Appendix C of the LON.
Public Comment	
Public Comments Received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No public comments were received.