

Program Review

Executive Summary

Applied Health Studies

Majors Reviewed:

- *Applied Health Studies (BAH), B.S.*
- *Applied Health Studies – Occupational Therapy Assistant (BAO), B.S.*
- *Applied Health Studies – Paramedic Science (BAB), B.S.*
- *Applied Health Studies – Physical Therapist Assistant (BAL), B.S.*
- *Applied Health Studies – Surgical Technology (BAG), B.S.*
- *Applied Health Studies – Radiography (BAR), B.S.*

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Pennsylvania
College of Technology

A Penn State Affiliate

The Bachelor of Science in Applied Health Studies is a unique 100% online degree-completion program designed to support credentialed and associate degree healthcare professionals to earn a bachelor's degree. The program includes six in-program major codes and one standalone pre-major code. Applied Health Studies provides a 2+2 option for current PCT students in healthcare-related majors, and graduates of those majors, who desire to pursue a bachelor's degree. Internally, this program serves the Occupational Therapy Assistant, Radiography, Surgical Technology, Physical Therapist Assistant, and Paramedic Science programs.

Since December 1999, the program has been having a strong track record of graduates obtaining employment in hospital systems, ambulatory care clinics, medical labs, physicians' offices, public health/community health agencies, state agencies, and many more settings. Trends in graduate employment remain strong, and employment trends are projected to increase steadily, and at a much faster rate than the average for all occupations. The Graduate Survey shows a strong positive placement rate of 89.5% of program graduates being employed full-time in their "field of study or preferred field", and an even stronger overall placement rate of 97.9%. There is a need within the healthcare industry for higher-level trained personnel in healthcare management; the Bureau of Labor Statistics explains: "Employment of medical and health services managers is projected to grow 32 percent from 2019 to 2029, much faster than the average for all occupations". Demand exists for clinical as well as nonclinical roles in management, administration, public health, research, health promotion, community paramedicine, medical equipment sales, and education – all areas served by this degree. Many of the common job titles held by Applied Health Studies graduates are included in the 2020 Pennsylvania High Priority Occupations listing. Externally, there is a low level of competition from similar programs.

Course-level and program-level assessments reveal that outcomes have met or exceeded benchmarked outcomes during the review period. No gaps in curriculum outcomes were found. The program's goals align well with both the College and the NHS missions. Good progress has been made in accomplishing the recommendations from the 2016 program review. Based upon this review, program faculty see no reason to alter the program or its courses at this time.

In terms of program scope and productivity, some significant changes occurred during the review period as major codes were added, terminated, and changed for a variety of necessary reasons. Overall headcount has declined during the review period due to terminations of related major codes, gaps in funding within Pennsylvania for online education, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of graduating students (despite a decline in enrollment) has remained fairly consistent throughout the review period.

The program's advisory committee does need to be rebuilt to capture a strong mix of internal and external stakeholders. This is a fiscally sound program with a low cost per credit, providing comprehensive education at the bachelor's level through distance education, valuing diversity and lifelong learning as students are prepared for professional success in the healthcare disciplines.

Recommendations from this review include:

- Continue to assess the HTH course outcomes for benchmarks of success and professional relevancy.
- Continue to develop and assess the internal and external marketing plan for program recruitment.

- Recruit a variety of healthcare professionals to rebuild program advisory committee.
- Actively pursue pathway agreements with two-year institutions.
- Allow students in healthcare-based associate degrees from other institutions with which we have a pathway agreement to begin program coursework (HTH courses).
- Explore process by which Allied Health students can declare dual degree status with Applied Health Studies.
- Develop outreach to existing healthcare partners and CTCs to recruit students into the Applied Health major.
- Eliminate the various concentrations of the major to simplify marketing and communication efforts for internal audiences (current associate-degree students)
- Assess the need and the appropriateness for HTH courses to be added to directed electives for programs outside of NHS.