



Appendix E
Specialized Admissions Status
Initial Approval Request

In accordance with Board of Governors Regulation 8.013, Specialized Admissions

Institution: University of West Florida

Degree Program: B.S. in Entry-Level Respiratory Therapy

CIP Code: 51.0908 **Effective Academic Year:** 2025-26

1. Does the proposed program qualify as a Program of Strategic Emphasis, as described in the Florida Board of Governors 2025 System Strategic Plan?
[Programs of Strategic Emphasis List](#)

- ☐ Yes, it does qualify as a Program of Strategic Emphasis.
☒ No, it does not qualify as a Program of Strategic Emphasis.

Programs of Strategic Emphasis Waiver (*for baccalaureate programs only*)
 Does the program fall under one of the CIP codes listed below?

- ☐ Yes
☒ No

If yes, students in the program will be eligible for the Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver. For additional details, refer to [Board Regulation 7.008](#) and the [Programs of Strategic Emphasis Waiver Guidance](#).

CIP CODE	CIP TITLE
11.0101	Computer and Information Sciences
11.0103	Information Technology
13.1001	Special Education
13.1202	Elementary Teacher Education
14.0801	Civil Engineering
14.0901	Computer Engineering
14.1001	Electrical and Electronics Engineering
27.0101	Mathematics
40.0801	Physics
52.0301	Accounting
52.0801	Finance
52.1201	Management Information Systems

2. Does this request for specialized admissions status apply to the whole degree program? If no, please specify which major(s) or track(s) are seeking the status.

UWF is requesting specialized admissions status for the BS in Entry-Level Respiratory Therapy (BS-RT) degree program. There are no other majors in the BS-RT degree program so the specialized status would apply to the whole degree program.



3. Which criteria does the program meet for specialized admissions status?

- ☒ Limited Resources (if approved, the status will last a maximum of four years)
- ☐ Minimal Skills (if approved, the status will last a maximum of five years)
- ☒ Accreditation Requirements (If checked, you must also select either limited resources or minimal skills)

4. Provide a rationale for why the program meets the criteria selected above.

- If the program is seeking specialized admissions status due to limited resources, provide details regarding which types of resources are limited and how the current demand for the program outpaces these resources.
- If seeking specialized admission status based on accrediting body requirements, please include the name of the accrediting body and a direct link to or copies of the specific standard(s) that require the requested status.

The BS-RT program will seek CoARC accreditation for this program. CoARC accreditation is required because it ensures that a respiratory care education program meets established quality standards, providing assurance to students, employers, and the public that graduates are properly prepared to practice respiratory therapy. CoARC sets rigorous curriculum standards to ensure students receive proper training in respiratory therapy.

The State of Florida requires RT graduates to complete a CoARC-accredited program to be eligible for the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) and Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) licensure exams administered by the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC). Without accreditation, graduates are not eligible for state licensure, preventing them from working as respiratory therapists. Employers prioritize hiring graduates from accredited programs because they trust the quality of their education and training.

Phase 1 of CoARC accreditation was the approval of the Letter of Intent (see attachment 1) , where the maximum annual enrollment was approved for one cohort per calendar year of up to 24 students per cohort. Maximum enrollment is based on new enrollments only from January 1 to December 31 for a given year.

CoARC Standard 2.13 (see attachment 2) mandates that accredited respiratory therapy programs maintain appropriate faculty-to-student ratios (2:1 up to 6:1 clinical preceptors/instructors) to ensure student competency and patient safety in laboratory, simulation, and clinical settings. Healthcare facilities also set their own capacity limits to ensure manageable workloads for their staff and effective student training. RT students require direct oversight from preceptors and/or clinical instructors to ensure patient safety. A limited number of experienced preceptors/instructors are available at each clinical site in the Gulf Coast region, and overloading them with too many students can reduce the quality of instruction. Clinical sites prioritize patient care, and an excessive number of students can overwhelm healthcare teams and disrupt workflows. Too many students in one unit can lead to distractions, delays, and increased risks for errors in patient treatment. To comply with this CoARC standard and support our local clinical



affiliates, our program must limit enrollment based on the availability of qualified clinical faculty and clinical site capacity.

CoARC limits enrollment at all accredited programs including FAMU's program and UWF's proposed BS-RT program. While limits to enrollment include faculty:student teacher ratios are a contributing factor, the more important factor is clinical capacity for students. Programs in geographic regions with more and larger medical facilities can often be granted higher capacity limits as long as they have adequate faculty. While there is a tremendous need for respiratory therapists in the western panhandle of Florida, the regions where UWF is situated does not have enough hospitals with large enough RT departments to accommodate unlimited students.

Additionally, clinical placement opportunities are inherently limited due to competition with other healthcare programs, availability of preceptors, and facility-imposed student caps. Expanding enrollment beyond our current capacity would compromise compliance with accreditation standards, quality of instruction, and clinical affiliate limitations.

UWF currently has six clinical affiliations:

- Baptist Health Care Hospital, Pensacola, FL
- Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital, Pensacola, FL
- Santa Rosa Medical Center, Milton, FL
- Studer Family Children's Hospital at Ascension Sacred Heart, Pensacola, FL
- HCA Florida Healthcare West Hospital, Pensacola, FL
- North Okaloosa Medical Center, Crestview, FL

Each of these sites takes no more than four RT students at a time. The BS-RT faculty will work with clinical affiliate sites to schedule learning opportunities that include night and weekend clinical rotations. Additionally, there are two other active respiratory therapy programs competing for clinical placement opportunities (Gulf Coast State College and Coastal Alabama Community College) in the area. UWF continues to work amicably with these programs to make sure all learning opportunities are being equally met.

Other reasons for meeting CoARC Standard 4.09 (see attachment 2):

- Clinical sites have a limited number of ventilators, simulation equipment, and patient cases for students to work with. Overcrowding can dilute hands-on learning opportunities. Students need sufficient time to practice skills like intubation, ventilator management, and patient assessment under supervision.
- Clinical instructors and preceptors can only effectively mentor a limited number of students at a time. Overburdened preceptors may struggle to provide individualized instruction, leading to gaps in learning.
- Too many students in a clinical setting can lead to increased errors, distractions, and inefficiencies. Proper supervision ensures that patient care standards are met while students are learning.

CoARC Standard 2.03 (see attachment 2) requires our program to ensure that students complete the required clinical hours in accredited healthcare facilities, with appropriate



supervision by qualified clinical preceptors. Clinical exposure properly prepares students for board examinations, clinical simulation assessments, and future job opportunities. However, the number of available clinical sites and preceptors is limited, which directly impacts our program's ability to admit additional students without compromising the quality of clinical education and supervision.

- Fewer clinical sites mean more students per available site, which can overwhelm clinical instructors and preceptors. While CoARC allows up to a 6:1 student/preceptor ratio, most local clinical sites, during BS-RT program conversations, have requested a 2:1 student/preceptor ratio due to patient volume, disease complexity, staff availability, and patient safety guidelines.
- Larger student groups may lead to less individualized attention and decreased opportunities for direct patient interaction.

CoARC requires that students meet certain academic, technical, and health-related standards before entering the program to ensure they are fully prepared for the academic and clinical components. These prerequisites include foundational coursework in biology, chemistry, and anatomy, as well as the demonstration of specific technical skills.

- Courses in anatomy and physiology, biology, and chemistry provide fundamental knowledge about the human body, respiratory system, and physiological processes. Understanding basic math and physics helps with calculations related to gas laws, ventilator settings, and medication dosages. Courses like psychology improve the ability to interact with patients, families, and healthcare teams effectively. Respiratory therapy programs are intensive, requiring students to grasp complex medical concepts quickly. Prerequisite courses ease the transition into advanced coursework by ensuring students are academically prepared.

Additionally, our program requires students to show proof of immunization, undergo drug screening, and complete a background check as part of the admissions process. These health and safety requirements are essential to ensuring that students are prepared to participate in clinical settings where patient safety is paramount.

- Respiratory therapy students interact with vulnerable patients, including those with weakened immune systems, premature infants, and critically ill individuals. Immunizations help prevent students from transmitting or contracting infectious diseases. Healthcare facilities require all personnel, including students, to meet specific immunization and screening standards to prevent outbreaks.
- Drug testing ensures students are not impaired while providing patient care, reducing risks of medication errors or unsafe clinical practices. Many healthcare facilities have strict zero-tolerance policies for drug use to maintain a professional and safe workplace.
- Background checks help identify any past criminal history that could indicate potential safety concerns.

Web Link to CoARC Accreditation Standards for Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice: <https://coarc.com/accreditation/entry-into-practice-standards/>



5. If the program seeks specialized admissions status due to limited resources and/or is a Program of Strategic Emphasis, provide the institution's plan and timeline for increasing program resources and provide a rationale if the institution does not plan to increase capacity over the next few years.

☐ Not applicable.

The BS-RT program seeks specialized admissions status due to limited resources, particularly related to faculty-to-student ratios and clinical site availability, as outlined in CoARC accreditation standards. The institution's approach to increasing program

capacity involves a gradual expansion plan that will be based on student interest and the number of applicants. This strategy ensures that growth is aligned with demand while maintaining high educational standards. The following initiatives support this approach:

1. Faculty Expansion: Over the next 2 years, the institution plans to expand faculty in response to student demand and to maintain the faculty-to-student ratio required by CoARC Standard 4.09. The faculty recruitment timeline is as follows:

Year 3: Hire 1 additional full-time faculty member to support increasing enrollment. The total number once the BS-RT program is fully operational will be 3 full-time faculty members. UWF already has two of those full-time faculty hired. UWF will start the search for the final faculty member in the 2025-2026 academic year. UWF has received a grant from Triumph Gulf Coast to fund this additional line in Year 3.

Year 5: Hire additional faculty (full-time & adjunct) based on the number of applicants and student enrollment.

2. Clinical Site Development: To accommodate growth, the program will expand its network of clinical sites. The number of clinical placements will be adjusted based on enrollment levels, and new partnerships with healthcare facilities will be established. The goal is to secure 10-12 RT clinical sites by 2027 to meet the demand for clinical hours as student numbers increase.

6. If approved for specialized admissions status, what will be the program's admissions requirements? Additionally, please indicate how these requirements and procedures ensure equal access for qualified Florida College System Associates in Arts graduates competing for available space in the program.

- Complete prerequisite courses with a grade of "C" or better.
- Complete general education requirements, including foreign language and civic literacy.
- Minimum overall GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- Completed BS-RT program application, including a personal statement.
- Completed personal e-interview with the BS-RT program faculty.
- Meet the requirements for the BS-RT program, including immunizations, criminal background check, and drug screening.
- Completed observation or prior relevant healthcare experience.



Equal access for Florida College System Associate of Arts graduates: While the course numbers may differ, course equivalencies will be expected to meet admission requirements. All prerequisite requirements for the BS-RT program can be completed at FCS institutions, eliminating the need for additional pre-work at UWF. UWF President Martha Saunders has reached out to PSC President Ed Meadows and NWFSC President Mel Ponder to express UWF's intent to create a pathway for their students who qualify to enter the BS-RT program.

Required Signatures

Signed by:
Dallas H. Snider, Vice Provost, for Jaromy Kuhl
 2F7ACB1691914B1...

Provost's Signature

04/14/2025

Date

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "R. Snider", written over a horizontal line.

Board of Trustees Chair's Signature

6/12/2025

Date

June 12, 2025

Date Approved by the Board of Trustees