*Alabama Commission on Higher Education*

# Submission of a New Non-Degree Certificate

# UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE

# (Part 1: Description and Rationale)

1. **Institution: The University of Alabama**
2. **Date of Certificate Submission:** November 2024

**Contact Person and Title:**

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# Program Identification:

# Award Level (Undergraduate, Graduate, Post-Master’s): Undergraduate

Title: Adaptive Apparel Undergraduate Certificate

6-digit CIP: 19.0901

# Program Administration and Implementation:

Name of College/ School: College of Human Environmental Sciences

Name of Dean: Stuart Usdan

Name of Department: Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design

Name of Chairperson: Brian Taylor

Proposed program implementation date: Summer 2026

Anticipated ACHE meeting for notification: March 2025

Other considerations for timing and approval (e.g., upcoming SACSCOC review):

An **undergraduate certificate is a formal academic award that demonstrates a student is competent in specific skills or knowledge that enhances their professional preparation. An undergraduate certificate is conferred as the result of the successful completion of an approved academic program of study at the baccalaureate level with an applied focus. Completion of the certificate program appears on the official University transcript.**

**Unlike a major (or a minor), students may enroll in a certificate program without also being enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program.**

***Students who are only enrolled in certificate programs are not eligible for federal financial aid.***

Certificate programs will undergo periodic five-year reviews to judge their continued viability, curriculum, relevance, faculty qualifications and sufficiency, and course availability. These reviews will be conducted by a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Council Curriculum Committee. A mandatory review will also be triggered if changes are made to more than 25% of the curriculum or if any of the certificate’s required courses are changed. In addition, Certificate programs must be assessed annually, like degree programs, and they will be included in the department’s academic program review.

# Program Design:

**Brief Description of Program and Objectives. Explicitly identify the professional or applied focus of the program.**

The Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design (CTD) in the College of Human Environmental Sciences (CHES) will offer an undergraduate certificate program in Adaptive Apparel beginning in Summer 2026. The proposed 12-credit hour certificate includes four courses with a web-based module series and problem-based learning (PBL) activities. It will be offered online during the summer sessions to attract a diverse group of students and professionals across the country. Students can earn this certificate by completing the four required courses in one or two consecutive summers without the distractions that may arise during the regular academic year or while balancing other commitments. This proposed certificate will allow students to gain an advanced understanding of adaptive apparel consumers and businesses and in-depth knowledge and competencies in adaptive apparel design, marketing, and retailing.

**Need/Rationale: Briefly describe why this certificate is needed at UA.**

The World Health Organization estimates that 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the world's population, experience significant disability today. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022), up to 1 in 4 adults (60 million) in the U.S. have some disability, and 1 in 3 adults (1.3 million) in Alabama have a disability. The number of people with disabilities (PWD) is only growing with the increase in noncommunicable diseases and with people living longer. Disability affects people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Clothes designed for people with physical disabilities and the elderly, infirm, and post-surgery patients are known as adaptive apparel. It is estimated that the underserved adaptive apparel market could potentially reach $400 billion globally by 2026. In 2022, the U.S. adaptive apparel market was valued at $52.8 billion. The demand for adaptive apparel in the U.S. has been growing steadily because of the growing senior population, the increasing disabilities in people, and the rising awareness of the challenges faced by PWD. However, despite the significance of the population and its contribution to the marketplace, PWD's apparel needs and wants have been largely overlooked and excluded by the apparel industry. The neglect is due, in part, to a gap that exists between the PWD's apparel needs and the apparel industry's offerings and between the apparel industry's needs and the college curriculum in apparel merchandising and design (AMD). With the growing emphasis on an inclusive approach, the apparel industry needs its future employees to be able to solve the complex real-world problems related to adaptive apparel.

This proposed certificate provides an invaluable opportunity for college students, educators, industry professionals, and entrepreneurs to advance their understanding of adaptive apparel design, marketing, and retailing. It can serve as a valuable pathway for students to acquire specific skills, explore new career options, and enhance their employability in the adaptive apparel industry. This certificate will allow the apparel industry to meet the apparel needs of the PWD better by providing a skilled workforce. We hope this certificate program can ultimately improve the PWD community's quality of life.

In 2022, faculty members in the CTD Department (Dr. Xiao Tong and Mr. Brian Taylor) received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA), titled "Building Adaptive Apparel Competencies into the Higher Education Curriculum." It's a three-year collaborative grant project with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). Developing an undergraduate certificate program is one of the tasks included in the grant project. The faculty members and the CTD department have gained expertise and resources through the grant project and built a positive reputation in the adaptive apparel area. The strong reputation and resources laid a solid foundation for UA to create a successful certificate program in adaptive apparel. To our knowledge, no school in the U.S. offers an apparel program that focuses on training students to design, market, and sell adaptive apparel products. By developing this certificate program, employers and future students will recognize UA's leadership in the adaptive apparel industry. This certificate program can help UA with long-term growth, revenue generation, marketing, and branding.

This proposed certificate perfectly aligns with UA's strategic plan and college and departmental priorities. One of UA's institutional goals is "To provide a premier undergraduate and graduate education that offers a global perspective and is characterized by outstanding teaching, high-quality scholarship, and distinctive curricular and co-curricular programs." The strategic plan of the CHES emphasizes empowering students with knowledge and skills to bring positive changes and improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. The mission of the CTD department defines "engaged education" as the primary program goal.

**Projected Enrollment: Use the fields below to indicate projected total enrollment in years 1 - 5 of the certificate program.**

**Year 1: 8**

**Year 2: 10**

**Year 3: 12**

**Year 4: 15**

**Year 5: 20**

**Projected Completions: Use the fields below to indicate projected total completions in years 1 - 5 of the certificate program.**

**Year 1: 6**

**Year 2: 8**

**Year 3: 10**

**Year 4: 12**

**Year 5: 15**

**Projection Rationale: Please provide a rationale for the enrollment and completion projections listed above. The narrative should briefly explain how the projections were determined. List and describe any surveys done of local/regional/national target students. Also, describe any national data that exists on the need for this type of certificate.**

The projected enrollment in the proposed certificate program is likely small. However, we expect approximately 20 students to enroll as the program develops. The enrollment projections for this certificate are made based on a combination of the following factors.

1. We conducted a program interest survey with students currently enrolled in the apparel merchandising and design program (AMD) at UA and UNCG. Among the 117 participants, 17 students (15%) indicated a strong willingness to enroll in this certificate program, and 70 (60%) stated that they might consider this certificate program.

2. The adaptive apparel industry in the U.S. has been experiencing growth and increased job opportunities. The U.S. adaptive apparel market was valued at $52.8 billion in 2022. In the past few years, the amount of adaptive apparel available on the U.S. market has increased dramatically. Not only are there more brands that solely produce adaptive apparel, but many mainstream brands like Cat & Jack, Tommy Hilfiger, and Nike are also releasing adaptive collections. Additionally, adaptive apparel is being made available in more retail stores like Target and J.C. Penny. Those industry trends suggest increased job opportunities and demand for workers with specialized skills in the adaptive apparel industry.

3. In the past two years, when preparing and working on the USDA NIFA grant project on adaptive apparel, we connected with professionals in the industry to gather insights on the demand for specific skills and certifications. They all give importance to the proposed certificate and value this certificate program as a way to build and improve employee competency in the adaptive apparel industry.

4. The faculty members and the CTD department have gained expertise (teaching adaptive apparel courses/projects) and resources (course materials and the adaptive apparel lab) and built a positive reputation (news stories and conference presentations) in the adaptive apparel area while working on the USDA NIFA grant project on adaptive apparel. The combination of a strong reputation and ample resources creates an environment that appeals to students seeking the proposed certificate.

5. No other schools in the U.S. offer the same or similar certificate programs. Little or no competition in this area can lead to high student demand for this certificate.

We believe all these factors can serve as good indicators of strong anticipated enrollment in this proposed certificate program.

**Resources: Briefly describe personnel, physical facilities, equipment, library holdings, etc. needed for this program. Explain whether these are new or existing resources.**

Personnel 1: Dr. Xiao Tong is an Associate Professor in the CTD department at UA. She holds a Ph.D. in Textile and Apparel Management and has extensive research and teaching experience in fashion marketing, retailing, social responsibility, and branding management. She received several mini-grant awards for her innovative teaching practices in the classroom. Dr. Tong is the Program Director (PD) of the USDA NIFA grant project on adaptive apparel and has previously taught adaptive apparel marketing and merchandising courses.

Personnel 2: Mr. Brian Taylor is a senior instructor in the CTD department at UA. He holds a Master of Science degree and a certification in User-Centered Design from The New School at Parsons School of Design. He received the 2016 Joseph Rowland Teaching Award and is a faculty fellow for the Community-Engaged Learning program, Adobe Creative Campus, and the Experiential Learning program. Mr. Taylor is the CO-PD of the USDA NIFA grant project on adaptive apparel and has previously taught adaptive apparel design courses.

With the USDA grant fund, we have developed a web-based module series on adaptive apparel, built an adaptive apparel lab, and purchased necessary supplies for the lab, including course materials (books, specialty fabric, trims, and innovative adaptive findings) and the technologies and equipment (laptop computer, iPad Pro and scanner, heat press transfer, miscellaneous supplies). We believe these existing resources are sufficient for achieving the objectives of the proposed certificate. No new resources are needed from the department, college, or university.

**Proposed delivery format (100% in-person, 100% online, hybrid, multiple formats):** 100% Online

**If hybrid, what % of the program will be delivered online?** N/A

**If multiple formats, which ones?** N/A

**Total Credit Hours required to complete the program (9-21 credit hours):** 12 credit hours

**Please identify any specialized accreditation that may apply to this certificate. Will you seek accreditation? No**

**Will the curriculum require work-based or experiential learning (internship, practicum, etc.)? If yes, please explain (if no, enter N/A). Definitions and examples of different types of work-based learning are available on the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship website. Click the help icon for a link to the site.**

**No**

**Will the program be designed to meet educational requirements licensure and/or certification required for entry-level employment? If yes, please list the license and/or certifications(s). If no, enter N/A.**

**N/A**

1. **Employment Occupational Alignment**

**Using the federal Standard Occupational Code (SOC) System, please indicate the top three occupational codes related to post-graduation employment from the program. A full list of SOCs can be found on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website and a list of Alabama’s “In-Demand Occupations” is available on ACHE’s Policy/Guidance website. Include the number and title of the SOC Code.**

**SOC 1 (Required) - Click the Help icon for a link to the SOC Classification System and ACHE's Policy/Guidance site.**

**27-1022 Fashion Designers**

**SOC 2 (Required) - Click the Help icon for a link to the SOC Classification System and ACHE's Policy/Guidance site.**

**11-2000 Advertising, Marketing, Promotions, Public Relations, and Sales Managers**

**SOC 3 (Required) - Click the Help icon for a link to the SOC Classification System and ACHE's Policy/Guidance site.**

**25-1190 Miscellaneous Postsecondary Teachers**

# Relationship to other programs within the institution:

**Is the proposed program associated with any existing offerings, including options (concentrations, minors) within current degree programs? If yes, please explain (if no, enter N/A).**

**N/A**

1. **Evaluation**

**Student Learning Outcomes or Professional Competencies: What professional skills are students expected to achieve with this certificate? As with student learning outcomes, these skills must be observable. Completion of the certificate authenticates that the student has mastered the skills.**

**Succinctly list at least three (3) learning outcomes, but no more than five (5).**

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**Attach an Assessment Plan for the proposed program to include the student learning outcomes (professional skills), assessment measures, and a curriculum map.**

# Submission of a New Non-Degree Certificate (Part 2: Course Information)

# Application, Admission, General Requirements, and Curriculum

1. Intended program duration in semesters for full-time students:

One or two consecutive summers

1. Intended program duration in semesters for part-time students:

One or two consecutive summers

1. How many hours (if any) of the Certificate can be counted towards a degree program, concentration, or minor? Which degree program(s), concentration(s), and/or minor(s), be specific? If possible, list the specific courses from the Certificate that can be counted towards the degree program?"

No credit hours in this certificate program will be counted towards a degree program, concentration, or minor.

1. **Transfer Credit – No transfer credit is allowed from another institution to meet the Certificate requirements.**
2. **Admission Criteria/Process**
   1. **Please list any special admission criteria or admission process. None**
   2. **State whether the Certificate is available to students who are not currently seeking a bachelor’s degree at UA.**

**Yes, it is open to students not currently seeking a bachelor’s degree at UA.**

## Curricular Requirements

Please complete the table below indicating all coursework for the proposed program, specifying any new courses developed for the program, along with courses associated with each option as applicable. Include the course number and number of credits. The coursework listed should total the number of hours required to complete the program.

1. **List the courses required for the program. Explicitly list at least 50% of the Certificate coursework as “required courses,” with no more than 50% of the courses being electives or support courses. Any changes to the curriculum will trigger a formal review of the program.**
2. **Only allow choices from lists of explicit courses, and not generally types of courses (for example, any 200-level MATH course, is not acceptable).**
3. **Provide justification for required hours beyond 21 credit hours.**
4. **At least 50% of the required coursework at the 300 or 400 level. If 50% of the coursework is not at the 300/400 level, please explain how intended professional competence requires the deviation.**
5. **List all prerequisites**

| Four Required Courses for the Adaptive Apparel Certificate | | Hours |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [CTD 213](https://courseinventory.ua.edu/search/?P=CTD%20213) | Intro to Adaptive Apparel | 3 |
| [CTD 253](https://courseinventory.ua.edu/search/?P=CTD%20253) | Intro to Adapted Apparel Des | 3 |
| [CTD 383](https://courseinventory.ua.edu/search/?P=CTD%20383) | Adaptive Apparel Mktg & Retail | 3 |
| [CTD 453](https://courseinventory.ua.edu/search/?P=CTD%20453) | Advanced Adapted Apparel Des | 3 |
| Total Hours | | 12 |

1. **Describe any other special admissions or curricular requirements for the program.** N/A