

Market Analysis: Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis

Prepared for University of Oregon Online

June 2019

In the following report, Hanover assesses demand for master's degree programs in applied behavior analysis, specifically highlighting national demand trends. This report includes an examination of student and labor market demand, as well as analysis of potential competitor programs.



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Executive Summary

Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis

Recommendations

Based on an analysis of degree completions, labor market demand, and market competitors, Hanover recommends that University of Oregon Online:

1 Establish an online master's program in applied behavior analysis.

Both student and labor demand indicators for applied behavior analysis are positive, and University of Oregon will face relatively few local competitors.

2 Develop partnerships to provide students with fieldwork or other supervised experience opportunities that will prepare them for their profession.

Though fieldwork is not required for official recognition of the curriculum, prospective behavior analysts must complete practical hours before sitting for the professional exam. Though these opportunities do not necessarily need to be part of credited coursework, giving students access to hands-on experience will increase their employability.

Key Findings and Program Demand Forecast

For applied behavior analysis programs in the United States

Applied behavior analysis is a small but swiftly growing field.

Despite low conferral volume, rapid regional and national growth suggests strong student demand for this discipline. Furthermore, the presence of online programs indicates a distance format is viable and will likely appeal to working professionals.

Associated occupations are predicted to grow much faster than average.

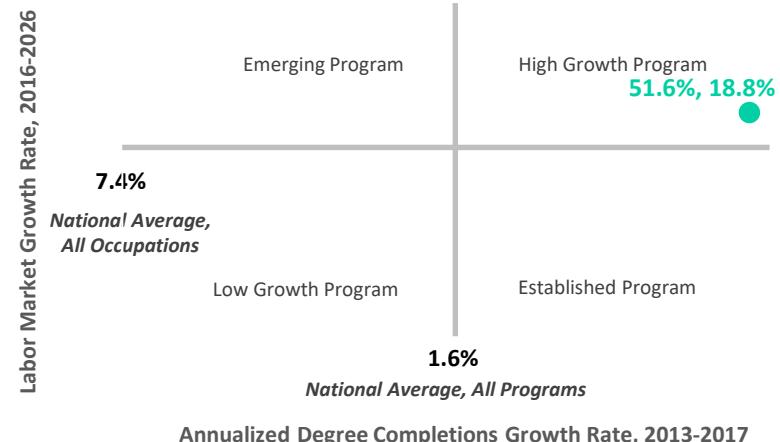
The Bureau of Labor Statistics anticipates that relevant counseling positions will be numerous and fast growing. These trends suggest positive employment prospects for program graduates.

The market for applied behavior analysis degrees is not saturated, particularly in Oregon.

Only 44 institutions nationwide reported applied behavior analysis programs in 2017. Hanover identified two in Oregon, one of which is a certification preparation rather than a full master's program.

National Benchmark Analysis

Comparison of applied behavior analysis completions and relevant labor market to all completions and all occupations in the country



Fast Facts

 **42.5%** Average annualized growth rate of applied behavior analysis completions in the Far West region

 **16.2%** National projected employment growth for relevant occupations from 2016 to 2026

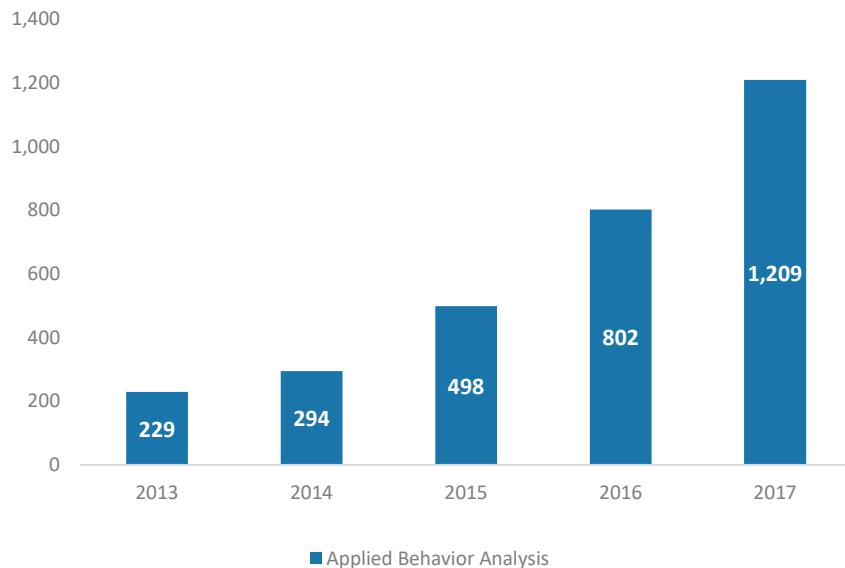
 **7** Number of online applied behavior analysis master's programs nationwide

Degree Completions Analysis

Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis

National Degree Completions Volume

Distribution of degree completions in the country from 2013 to 2017



Total Degree Completions

Degree completions by geographic level (2017)

	Oregon	Far West	National
Applied Behavior Analysis	0	103	1,209
Growth Rate	--	42.5%	51.6%
All Degree Fields, Growth Rates	4.9%	2.9%	1.6%

Analysis of Findings

Applied behavior analysis is a small field, but has grown faster than average in the far west region and nationwide.

Data on applied behavior analysis is somewhat limited as institutions conferred a total of only 1,209 degrees nationwide in 2017, and no conferrals were reported in Oregon. However, the field has grown rapidly, by an average annualized rate of 42.5 percent in the Far West and 51.6 percent in the nation (well above the respective averages of 2.9 percent and 1.6 percent for all master's). This growth suggests strong student demand for related degrees.

Though relatively few applied behavior analysis programs offer online tracks, online programs are viable and may attract more students.

Of the 44 applied behavior analysis programs identified by IPEDS, six reported distance learning options in 2017. Hanover identified a total of seven online programs (though Northeastern did not report a distance learning option in 2017, it had previously and appears to still have an online program). This figure does not include online certification courses, or education master's with applied behavioral analysis concentrations. Online learning options are increasingly popular. According to [Inside Higher Ed](#), 52 percent of master's students use online programming; as of 2016, 31 percent of master's students were enrolled in entirely online programs and 21 percent in partially online programs. This is significantly higher than the proportion of online master's students in 2000 (13 percent – 5 percent totally online, 8 percent partly online). [BestColleges.com](#) notes that most (69 percent) of online students are career minded, and often seek online programs for their flexibility. Distance learning allows these students to gain qualifications that advance their careers without pausing them.

Applied Behavior Analysis programs have two options for Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) recognition.

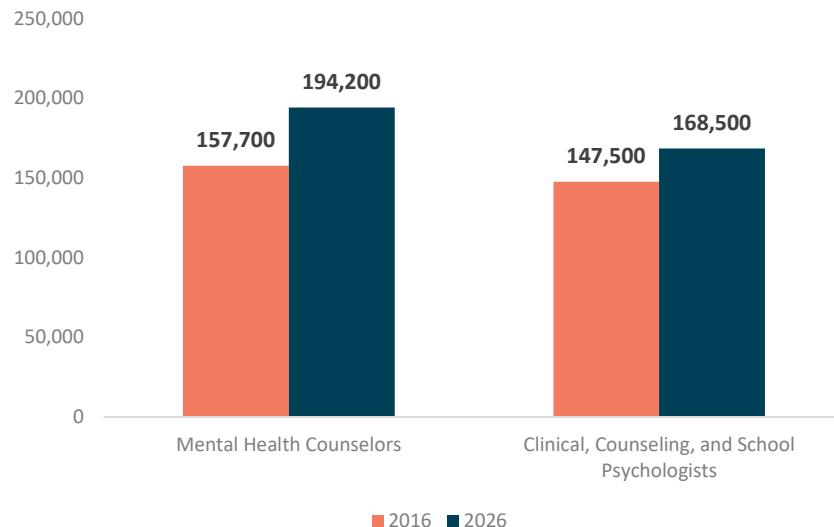
As of 2019, the [Behavior Analyst Certification Board](#) (BCBA) relinquished accreditation responsibilities to the [Association for Behavior Analysis International](#). Applied behavior analysis programs are recognized either as accredited or as a verified course sequence. ABAI writes that “[a]ccreditation is a peer-review process guided by standards in which a program completes a comprehensive review of the overall coursework, faculty, research, curriculum, experiential learning, and outcome measures of the overall program. Although complete programs that contain a VCS may apply for accreditation from ABAI, it is not required.” Verified course sequences are more common – among reviewed programs, only Saint Cloud State University is officially accredited.

Labor Market Analysis

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National Current and Projected Job Availability

Applied behavior analysis-related positions in the country as of 2016 and 2026 (projected)



Total Labor Market

Aggregate applied behavior analysis-related job availability by geographic level

	Oregon	Far West	National
2016	4,520	58,280	305,200
2026	5,280	67,700	362,700
Growth Rate	16.8%	16.2%	18.8%
Total Annual Openings	510	6,040	33,700

Source: [Projections Central](#)

Analysis of Findings

Counseling positions are expected to grow faster than average at all geographic levels, and much faster than average nationally.

Though applied behavior analysis is more specialized than general counseling, these trends suggest that graduates of University of Oregon's proposed program will find employment. Of the two related occupations, mental health counseling positions are expected to grow faster than clinical, counseling, and school psychologist positions. Of the two career outcomes, the Bureau of Labor Statistics also expects that mental health counselor positions will be more prevalent in Oregon and the nation (though psychologist roles will be more numerous in the Far West).

Becoming a Board Certified Behavior Analyst requires graduate work and supervised experience.

The [Behavior Analyst Certification Board](#) outlines three pathways to becoming a certified behavior analyst. Prospective analysts must complete a graduate degree in behavior analysis, education, or psychology. They must complete verified coursework, a post-doctoral experience, or hold a faculty position, and also gain field experience. Practicum requirements range from 500 to 1,500 hours depending on prior education and professional experience. Students taking the route of a master's and qualified coursework must complete between 750 and 1,500 practical hours (750 for an intensive practicum, 1,000 for a practicum, and 1,500 for supervised independent fieldwork). Students with a doctoral degree and faculty appointment or postdoctoral fellowship need only complete 500 practical hours.

Demand for Board Certified Behavior Analysts has also grown significantly over the last ten years.

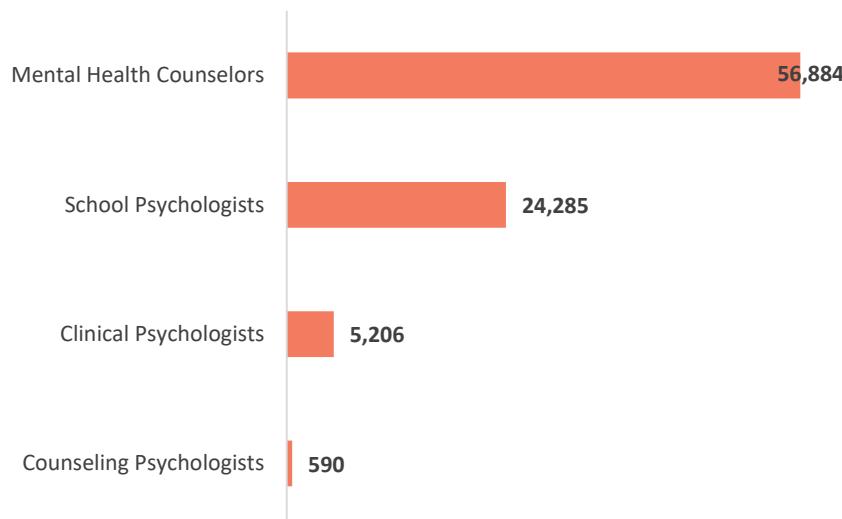
[BACB](#) reports that demand for credentialed behavior analysts increased 800 percent from 2010 to 2017. Demand is especially high in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, and Illinois. Similarly, the [BLS](#) predicts strong labor demand for behavioral disorder and mental health counselors, particularly in rural communities with limited access to healthcare services. The BLS also notes that [clinical, counseling, and school psychologists](#) are the fastest-growing subset of psychologists. School psychology positions are expected to be particularly prevalent due to growing awareness of the connection between mental health and learning, and resulting initiatives to increase mental healthcare in schools.

Real-Time Job Postings Intelligence

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National Job Postings Analysis

Applied behavior analysis-related positions in the country by occupational group during the past 180 days as of May 2019



National Employment Facts

Applied behavior analysis-related positions in the country by occupational group

Occupation	Average Salary		Unemployment Rate	
	Oregon	U.S.	Oregon	U.S.
Mental Health Counselors	\$57,400	\$46,600	2.0%	1.7%
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	\$93,100	\$81,300	0.7%	0.6%

Source: JobsEQ and BLS

Analysis of Findings

Employers across the nation posted a total of 86,965 applied behavior analysis-related jobs over the last six months, predominantly for mental health counselors and school psychologists.

Mental health counseling positions comprise about 65.4 percent of relating postings and school psychologist positions about 27.9 percent. According to the [BLS](#), the highest proportion (19 percent) of mental health counselors work in outpatient mental health and substance abuse centers. Graduates of applied behavior analysis programs are therefore most likely to find employment in mental health centers or schools.

Board Certified Behavior Analyst is a common required certification and job title.

Both Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst appear in the five most requested certifications for relevant jobs. While social work certifications are slightly more common, the recurring appearance of behavior analyst credentials indicates that employers seeks candidates with verified behavior analysis training.

Top Certifications

- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) - 8,250
- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) - 5,814
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) - 4,067
- Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) - 2,085
- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) - 628

Top Job Titles

- School Psychologist – 2,663
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst – 2,017
- Counselor – 1,187
- Psychologist – 953
- Mental Health Counselor - 882

Competitor Analysis

Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis

Competitor Analysis

Based on an analysis of national peers, Hanover concludes the following:

Competitive conditions indicate that a new master's program in applied behavior analysis is viable.

Both degree conferrals and the number of programs have increased rapidly, suggesting a growing student market for applied behavior analysis. University of Oregon would also have very few in-state competitors. Oregon Institute of Technology and Portland State University are the only two state institutions that offer relevant programs (both online), and Portland State University's program is a certification rather than a full master's degree. Given high demand and low saturation, University of Oregon will likely find the market viable, especially for a program that is available online.

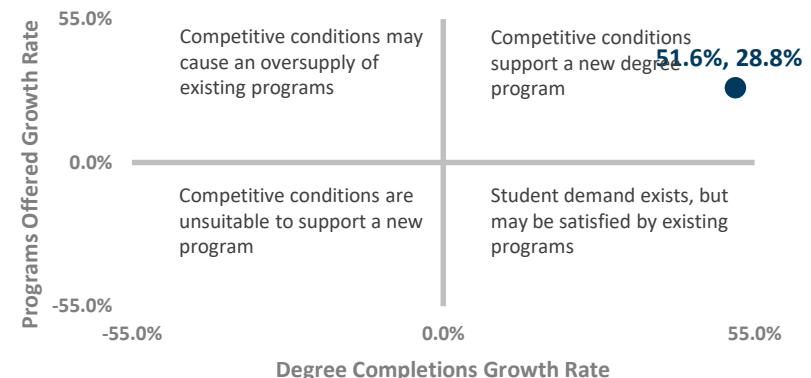
To provide a more detailed picture of the competitive landscape, Hanover has benchmarked ten national programs. Reviewed degrees include all applied behavior analysis master's reporting distance learning options to IPEDS, as well as a regional special education master's with applied behavior analysis emphasis and two regional certification programs (see data supplement).

Program Types



National Market Saturation (2013-2017)

Do competitive conditions in the nation support an additional applied behavior analysis program?



Program Location



Competitor Analysis

Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis

Admissions Requirements

Eight of 10 programs outline admissions requirements. Most of these eight are open to anyone with a bachelor's degree (typically with a GPA of 3.0 or higher). The exceptions are Oregon Institute of Technology, Touro University, and Portland State University.



Accreditation and Certification



- All reviewed programs include Behavior Analyst Certification Board Verified Course Sequences, but St. Cloud State University is the only officially accredited program. Accreditation is not necessary, but may distinguish a new program.
- All programs provide the coursework necessary to take the Board Certified Behavior Analyst exam. However, prospective behavior analysts must also complete practical hours (between 500 and 1,500, depending on education and experience), and not all institutions offer these opportunities.



Duration, Credits and Delivery

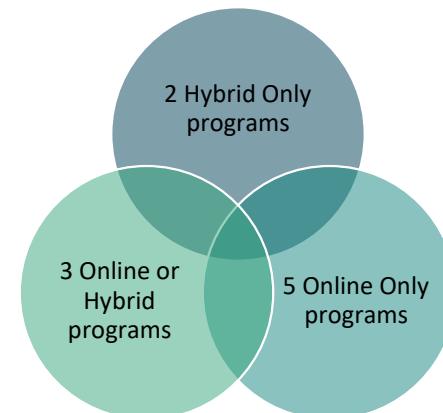
Duration: Of the five programs that state duration, all are completed in two years, although Northeastern University does provide an 18 month track.



Credits: Requirements for master's programs (not including reviewed certification programs) range from 45 to 73.5 credits, averaging about 56. Most programs require 45, while higher-credit programs tend to require more practical experience.



Delivery: Half of the benchmarked programs are delivered entirely online. The remaining five offer students a choice between online and hybrid programming, or are delivered in hybrid format.



Competitor Analysis

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Supervised Experience

Students must complete supervised experience to be eligible for the [Board Certified Behavior Analyst](#) exam. Applied behavior analysis programs are not required to provide this experience, though seven of 10 reviewed programs offer some sort of fieldwork opportunity. St. Cloud State is the only competitor that offers a practicum clearly aligned with official standards (a 750 hour clinical internship); all other institutions report practicums in terms of credit hours.



Specialization Endorsements



- No reviewed programs offer any sort of endorsement credential.

In-Person Components

Six programs have required in-person elements, while an additional two have optional in-person practicums. The only programs with no in-person requirements are Western Connecticut State University's [MS in Applied Behavior Analysis](#) and Portland State University's [Board Certified Behavior Analyst Program](#), neither of which includes any fieldwork.

Face-to-face elements at most programs are limited to field experience. However, the hybrid programs at Oregon Institute of Technology and Touro University and University of Hawaii's program require additional in-person components.



Research Requirements

Eight programs explicitly outline research requirements. Research curriculum at these institutions consists of 3 to 12 credits, averaging about 6.

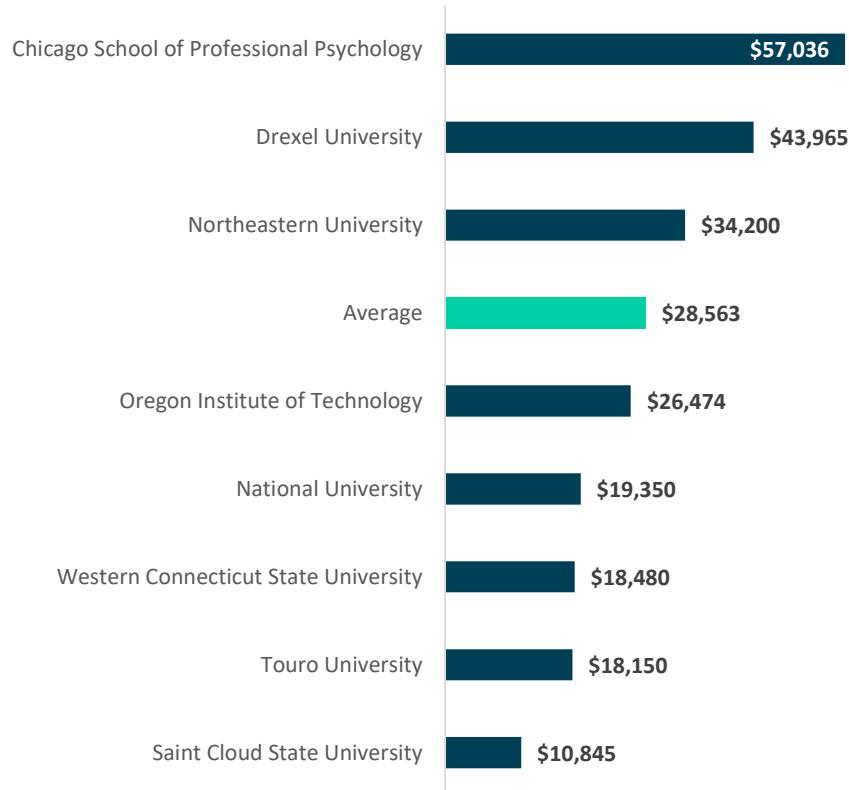


Competitor Analysis

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Total Estimated Tuition (In State)*

For reviewed master's programs, total estimated tuition ranges from \$10,845 at St. Cloud St. University to \$57,036 at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. On average, programs cost about \$28,563. University of Oregon's most relevant competitor, Oregon Institute of Technology, falls just below average, with a total estimated cost of \$26,474.



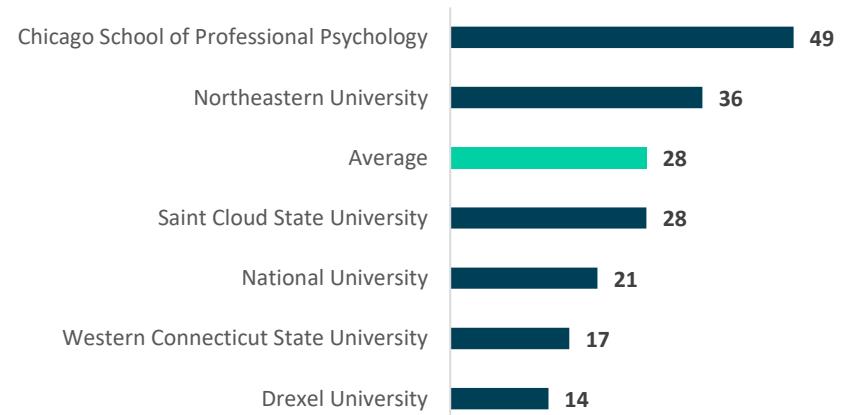
Target Audience

Very few (three) reviewed programs provide any insight into specific target audiences, but those that do advertise to working professionals.

National University	Adult learner (university-wide target audience)
Touro University	Working professionals or students with prior work experience
Portland State University	Working professionals or current graduate students in related programs

2017 Degree Conerrals

Benchmarked programs reported between 14 and 49 conferrals under the applied behavior analysis code in 2017, averaging approximately 28. University of Oregon's largest regional competitor is National University, which conferred 21 degrees in 2017. Completions data for Oregon competitors is unavailable.





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