External Review of New Graduate Level Academic Programs

University of Oregon

Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis

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1. Program
a. The program objectives and requirements; the mechanisms for program administration and assessment.

The program objectives and requirements meet and exceed the most up to date requirements for students to complete coursework required to earn a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) credential, which is a highly sought-after credential from employers. Students who choose to pursue the fieldwork component of the program will be able to fulfill fieldwork requirements that are required to apply for examination to earn a BCBA credential, prior to graduation.

The mechanisms for program administration are appropriate.

The mechanisms for program evaluation are appropriately linked to task list items described in the application. Though the application does not describe how student outcomes will be explicitly assessed, we understand the development of the evaluative process may need to coincide with the progress of the first cohort of students admitted to the program. Further, part of the process of program evaluation and change will likely involve revising how task list items are assessed in the future, in order to better capture student performance and program outcomes.

b. The program's alignment with the institution's mission and strategic objectives.

The program strongly aligns with the institution's mission, as well as its purpose, vision, and values. The program has potential to produce BCBAs capable of improving the well-being of Oregon children with disabilities and/or behavioral challenges and their families and communities. The program is designed to foster equity and inclusion through science-based service provision and outreach, making it a great match for University of Oregon's stated purpose, vision, and values. The program is committed to diversity and inclusion, and plans to include diversity in visual promotional materials, so that students can see themselves in the imagery and language of those materials. The program's sample syllabi also demonstrate inclusive practices in readings, materials and other content, and there is a program-wide professional development commitment to inclusion and equity.

c. The depth and breadth of coverage in terms of faculty availability and expertise, regular course offerings and directed study, and access to and use of support resources within and external to the institution.

The program appropriately addresses the depth and breadth of content required to meet credentialing and accreditation requirements. Dr. Machalicek is well positioned to lead program design and execution efforts, and she is also well qualified to recognize program needs to make strategic hires. The committee believes the addition of another tenure track faculty member would further elevate the potential stature and impact of this proposed program along the lines of research, teaching, and service components of the institution's mission. Also, given the

advising-intensive nature of this program, the addition of another tenure track faculty would help to provide a level of continuity and consistency that is likely required to run a high quality program of the stature for which the institution is known. However, the committee also understands budget considerations are rather prohibitive at this time. If the program is successful, the addition of another tenure line would be a valuable investment.

The course offerings, scheduling, and study are appropriate and in line with online programs offered in a cohort-type model.

The resources the program is accessing within and external to the institution are appropriate, and the committee acknowledges the work that has gone into identifying the technology that is required to operate the online program. Given this program will feature field experiences and supervision, it will be important to continue to consider privacy implications when choosing software, and to work to identify software that is HIPAA compliant when engaging in supervisory or field experience activities that involve remote/online connections. Given that Dr. Machalicek has experience with both HIPAA and FERPA compliance with the HEDCO clinic, she is well suited to select an appropriate software that will allow high-quality but compliant supervisory and field experiences. She has access to the University of Oregon's security and compliance officer as well.

d. The relationship of this program to undergraduate and other graduate programs at the institution and other institutions in the state, if appropriate. Consider collaborative arrangements, partnerships, interdisciplinary programs, service functions, joint research projects, support programs, etc.

Due to the accreditation requirements this program aims to meet, it is not reasonable to expect a collaborative relationship with other institutions in the state. The cohesive nature of course syllabi further eliminates the need for collaboration with other institutions in the state. Further, the committee is not aware of any other peer institutions that offer this type of program using a collaborative model across institutions.

It is possible that collaborations may be formed with undergraduate or graduate programs to serve as "feeder" programs, but the committee advises caution on this serving as the sole route of recruitment, especially if those feeder programs are teacher education programs, due to the unfortunate declining enrollment and public interest in pursuing those degree programs. Additional potential sources for students may be public health programs, speech and language pathology programs, psychology programs, and criminal justice programs.

e. The justification in terms of state needs, demand, access, and cost effectiveness (if this program represents duplication within the state).

The demand for professionals with a BCBA credential is considerably high, as indicated by recent market analysis conducted by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), which issues the BCBA credential. The institution will be addressing a critical shortage of BCBAs within the state by offering this online program. The online nature of this program will further

increase access and opportunity for students, too. Finally, the program is likely cost effective, though cost could be further reduced if the program were to eliminate the field experience component. However, the committee acknowledges that offering the field experience component will allow the program to ensure students are trained to high levels of competency and reflect the types of students of the high stature that is expected from this institution. Further, it is the committee's experience that students appreciate programs that offer supervised field experience components, and this component will help the program differentiate itself from other online programs that may be of lesser quality.

f. The probable impact of the program on the department or academic unit, as well as its effect on current programs.

We have every indication that the program will positively impact the department and will help to further raise the stature of the department and institution. The committee did not identify any potential negative impacts on current programs. The hiring of additional tenure track faculty may also allow the program to further positively impact the department and institution through the development of innovative and forward thinking training and research grants.

g. The program's major strengths and weaknesses.

Potential strengths:

This program is designed to meet the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) standards for accredited programs and it would be the first program with this status in the Pacific Northwest area.

This program has a course and a lab dedicated to the experimental analysis of behavior and this is in addition to a strong applied behavior analysis focus should produce strong leaders in the field/scientist-practitioners.

The program has an optional fieldwork component that promotes collaborative community partnerships. This can be helpful in meeting both student and community agency needs in the field at this time. For instance, students can log supervision hours from two or more different professionals, easing the workloads associated with each supervisor. One consideration to anticipate with this model is the degree to which the program will be vetting outside agencies to determine if they meet quality standards.

The curriculum (5th Ed. Task List) has been broken down to be embedded into courses in a developmental sequence. This was a nice and well-thought out feature that should be beneficial to all instructors and students as they work to understand the scope and sequence of the program.

The program includes close contact with an advisor to evaluate ongoing competencies among students. This should lead to confidence and consistency in student readiness for a capstone research study. This activity could alternatively be completed as a required component of fieldwork supervision each term.

The technology programs to be considered for use in this program are cutting edge. Many ideas proposed are designed to engage students through active learning strategies. These could be beneficial to highlight through marketing efforts.

Potential weaknesses:

Frontloading the traditional coursework in the first year with a second year focus in optional supervised fieldwork may have cons for students including 1) less potential to synchronize coursework and experience for optimal learning outcomes and 2) a longer delay between coursework and the time in which candidates are eligible to sit for the BCBA exam, potentially negatively affecting pass rate data. It can take about two years for candidates to meet current BACB standards in completing the supervised fieldwork experience so it may be beneficial to encourage or embed supervised experiences from the onset of the program. In this case, expediting coursework to be completed in only one year does not seem to have much benefit. As the program is piloted, this could be explored and adaptations may be considered down the line. The proposed model could alternatively be of benefit to students so that they are fully immersed in their fieldwork component, entering the bulk of their supervised experiences with a strong foundational knowledge-base.

An optional fieldwork component can lead to uncertainty with addressing ongoing needs with faculty and their respective workloads, while on the other hand, the flexibility allowed for students may attract candidates from diverse contexts thus improving enrollment. This potential issue could be mitigated by having students select their program line option early on in their programs. The program could also have a cap for the number of students admitted to the longer supervision program to ensure faculty capacity. Having approved fieldwork sites, as proposed, should also help this potential issue (i.e., established partnerships will help with planning anticipated enrollment numbers). The supervised fieldwork option for students will be more expensive and thus could be generally less desirable for students. We recommend comparing the program costs associated with the two lines and posting that for prospective students. The relative costs of each program line to gain revenue for the department should also be explored, as offering supervised fieldwork through faculty loads can be more demanding and costly than traditional coursework.

2. Faculty
a. The quality of the faculty in terms of training, experience, research, scholarly contributions, ability to generate external support, stature in the field, and qualifications to serve as graduate faculty.

Dr. Wendy Machalicek is a doctoral level Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA-D) with a strong history of obtaining competitive external funding. She publishes in a variety of journals, is the co-editor of the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, and has a strong relationship with community partners and stakeholders. She is very well qualified to serve as graduate faculty for the proposed program. Two additional faculty are to be hired, and we recommend that they be full-time faculty, preferably tenure-track, so that their commitment and expertise can become resources to the nationally respected doctoral program in place.

b. The faculty in terms of size, qualifications for area(s) of specialization offered, and the student body served. Include analysis of program sustainability in light of such factors as upcoming retirements, etc.

We are concerned that the two additional hires will each be expected to teach 8 independent courses a year. From our understanding, this teaching load comes in addition to advising students (which may include research supervision, which is incredibly time-intensive). Any efforts to reduce that load would strengthen the program and increase the likelihood of integration with existing strengths of the department. Supporting these new faculty by fostering their research productivity as well as teaching requirements will improve the likelihood that the faculty search will yield candidates that can contribute to University of Oregon's reputation as a research-1 institution. Overburdening faculty with teaching and advising responsibilities may make the positions less desirable to talented candidates. One way that might be accomplished is by providing mentored-to-independent teaching opportunities for PhD students, post-doctoral fellows, or both. This approach may further strengthen and diversify University of Oregon's research reputation.

We suggest that one of the new hires has a translational science background so that they can effectively teach the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (EAB) course required for accreditation by the ABAI and meet the requirements for the BACB Verified Course Sequence (VCS). A translational science background would combine the expertise needed to deliver high-quality instruction in EAB but also make sure that it is a relevant and dynamic course that will yield research ideas as well as broaden the research funding opportunities for the department, perhaps to National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) or National Science Foundation (NSF).

c. Areas of faculty strength and weakness.

Strengths:
The faculty in the department are reputable for their applied behavioral research lines and the department is renowned in the fields of special education and applied behavior analysis. The strong doctoral program in the department that includes graduate-level BCBAs will be beneficial to integrating needs across programs.

Potential weaknesses:
The current recommendations for total personnel could potentially benefit from an additional tenure-track faculty member. The responsibilities associated with maintaining a VCS for accreditation as well as the fieldwork component can be demanding so it could be recommended to grant an annual course release or two to a coordinator, depending on their other responsibilities.

In our meetings, we discussed the pros and cons of requiring faculty be operating locally versus via distance for a fully online program. The faculty we interviewed were open to

possibilities to prioritize goodness of fit to areas. One such niche area of need, as mentioned above, will be a translational research professional. We also suggest adding faculty member(s) with a strong record of publication in the field of applied behavior analysis so that they can independently lead students through research requirements associated with the program.

d. Faculty workload, including availability for student advising, research oversight, mentoring, and teaching effectiveness.

Dr. Machalicek, plus the addition of two teaching faculty, are likely sufficient to cover all aspects of the teaching and supervision demands of the program (though please see our notes above regarding hiring additional tenure line faculty). In order to ensure faculty can devote adequate time and attention to mentoring student research and supervising field experiences, we recommend their contracts reflect those activities and their expected teaching loads are reduced accordingly.

e. The credentials, involvement of, and reliance upon support faculty from other departments within the institutions, from other institutions, and/or adjunct faculty.

The program will be housed in a larger context of a highly successful research faculty that can enhance the quality of student experiences as well as provide opportunities for interdisciplinary research projects, but does not rely on those faculty to teach courses. Two new faculty are to be hired to develop and deliver new online courses.

3. Need
a. The evidence of sufficient demand and/or relevant employment opportunities for graduates of this program.

The demand for graduates of this program is considerably high, as evidenced by recent market analyses conducted by the BACB, the organization that issues the BCBA credential. In Oregon, and nationwide, the demand for people with a BCBA credential far exceeds the supply.
The program will need to make clear, when advertising, whether or not program requirements will fulfill licensure requirements to practice behavior analysis within the State of Oregon. If students attend this program from out of state, the program will also need to be aware that licensure requirements may vary from state to state, and that students should be aware as to whether or not completing this program's requirements will satisfy licensure requirements within their state. As it stands currently, licensure requirements are very similar across most states that have licensure.

b. The overall need for the program within the institution, state and/or region, and nation.

The committee was surprised to learn the institution did not have a program like the one being proposed. There are few programs of this nature in the pacific northwest, with the University of Washington being the only other "peer" institution to offer this type of program.

Nationwide, the demand for masters level applied behavior analysis programs is also high, and as the market becomes more competitive, achieving accreditation status will help to set this program apart from other online programs.

4. Resources
a. The adequacy of library, computer, laboratory, and other research facilities and equipment; offices; classrooms; support services for the program; and, if relevant, the program's utilization of resources outside the institution (e.g., field sites, laboratories, museums, libraries, and cooperative arrangements with other institutions).

Students in this program will have access to the library and other resources available to on campus students. The University of Oregon has a large library database and it has been proposed to add additional behavioral journals to the library.

The technology supports proposed are strong to compete successfully with other online programs. The Covid-19 pandemic increased the University of Oregon's ability to serve online students because capacity was needed to provide fully remote access to many student resources (writing centers, library support, etc.), and so the program will have the benefit of that increased capacity. The institution has the benefit of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity that supports accessibility and resources for faculty and students. Remote tutoring is available to all University of Oregon students.

Dr. Padma Akkaraju, the Directory of Diversity and Inclusion, may provide additional support and suggestions for ensuring recruitment and retention of students belonging to underrepresented groups. The online nature of this program may improve diversity of the student body as well as the recruitment of participants for capstone projects that can become publishable research, extending the reach of the University of Oregon beyond the diversity represented by the population of Eugene and surrounding areas.

Because supervised practicum hours are required for professional certification, it will be important for the department to invest in HIPAA and/or FERPA compliant telepractice software. GoReact, Doxy.me, Zoom for health, or other similar software may already be licensed by University of Oregon for other programs and could be used by this program as well. High-quality graphing software will also be an important resource for students and if possible, a site license for Prism GraphPad or other graphing software will provide equitable access for all students to meet their educational requirements.

Because the program will have local partners for students to complete their fieldwork and research experiences, the existing resources of partnering agencies (e.g., assessments, curriculum) could potentially be afforded to students at little to no cost to the department. For example, the HEDCO clinic is an existing interdisciplinary clinic that can serve as a field site for students local to Eugene. Local and non-local agencies should also find they benefit on their end from having their students supported at the institution through the supervision program.

The program will have access to an embedded online instructional technologist and instructional designers, including media producer, exam management, online and distance-based in person exam proctoring (sensitive to issues related to diversity and equitable

access). The program's students and faculty will also have access to an existing call center for online support.

b. The proposed budget and any need for new resources to operate the program effectively. Where appropriate, review resources available to support graduate students (e.g., fellowships and other scholarships, teaching and research assistantships).

Students will be eligible for college-wide scholarships and financial support opportunities. In addition, the department has a solid history of obtaining Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) training grants that can provide tuition, course development, and other support. It is possible that internal scholarships may also be created and earmarked for students in this program, especially those from underrepresented groups that may not otherwise have the opportunity to advance their education. This is a crucial area because although behavior analysts serve a diverse population, those in leadership positions in the field do not necessarily reflect that same diversity.

c. In terms of national standards, the institution's commitment to the program as demonstrated by the number of faculty relative to workload and student numbers, support for faculty by nonacademic personnel (e.g., support, staff, technicians), financial support for students, and funds for faculty research and professional activities (e.g., conferences, visiting lectures).

This program is designed to meet the ABAI accreditation standards, a rank held by only a fraction of the existing BACB VCSs. The faculty work loads for the proposed tenure track and instructional faculty are commensurate with departmental and college standards as well as that of similar research institutions. Notably, a part time staff member is slated to support the program for activities like admissions and other clerical activities. This will be very helpful as the clerical work associated with maintenance of a VCS program as well as the fieldwork component can be extensive. ABAI does allow persons without a BCBA credential to support program submissions and renewals, so this may be one useful role for the part-time staff member.

A nice feature of the program is the cohort model that will admit approximately 15 to 25 students per year. This is a reasonable number for a cohort to give online students an intimate enough feel to foster collegial relationships among each other and develop potentially life-long professional relationships. Because the program is intended to admit students who work for or who will eventually work for specific partnering agencies, many students within a cohort may end up working with one another. This feature enhances students' abilities to complete collaborative projects with one another. A few nationally offered online VCS programs have very large cohorts and thus more reach, but they may lack the appeal and quality that comes with a local, research-focused, intimate program such as the proposed one.

Students are likely to obtain scholarship, grant, or stipend funding opportunities specific to the program given state-wide and national efforts to expand capacity in the field of applied

behavior analysis. Funds could be acquired by institutional faculty efforts or through local agencies looking to fund their own employees to earn BCBA credentials.

There also appears to be adequate funding for student and faculty research and professional activities. The strong single-case research focus of this program will allow both students and faculty to be engaged in relatively inexpensive research pursuits. Single-case research is embedded into the activities and competencies of the students-practitioners within the program, thereby enhancing affordable opportunities for faculty engagement in publishable and presentable research in high quality peer-reviewed journals and conferences.

We recommend that the costs for credential/licensure maintenance and professional development required for BCBAs be factored in as a benefit for instructional faculty. Consider that licensure across different states for fieldwork supervisors may also need to be in the budget to the extent that students outside of Oregon are considered in the program. Doctoral-level practitioners in the field of applied behavior analysis can often make significantly more in salary than university instructor base salaries; it may be beneficial to consider this in faculty recruitment efforts. Healthy travel funds for instructional faculty, schedule and/or location flexibility, and access to as well as expressed value in scholarly opportunities for instructors can offer relatively nice incentives to attract numerous faculty prospects.

d. Institution leaders' commitment to this program in the long term.

The Dean is supportive of the program and sees the value in capitalizing in the strength of the institution. The Provost is keen to invest in the overall program. Although this is a new venture, they are willing to provide two new career track positions and allow the program to develop a strong trajectory over the next three to four years.

e. The institution's ability to sustain the program in the foreseeable future along with its current and future projected commitments.

The program blends well within existing programs and commitments of the institution. It should contribute to the records of high rankings that the College of Education at the University of Oregon currently holds. This program will diversify graduate program offerings in the department. It will coincide nicely with the doctoral program in special education that has historically brought in several funded students with a BCBA credential. It will be beneficial for these doctoral students to serve as graduate assistants for the program courses or fieldwork supervisors.

With Oregon passing licensure for Behavior Analysts in recent years, an increased and ongoing statewide demand for BCBAs should be anticipated across a variety of sectors. Marketing is recommended to be geared toward undergraduate students across related programs (e.g., SPED minor), related departments or colleges (e.g., psychology), local agencies, and local school districts. We envision this online program to offer a wide reach while also serving primarily local students, including those in rural areas surrounding Eugene. The program will in turn help to expand the reach of BCBAs serving local individuals warranting applied behavior analysis services.

SUMMARY

A quality BCBA master's program in the Pacific Northwest Region has high potential to draw the targeted numbers of students (i.e., 15-25 per year) now and into future years, given the Hanover Report on the proposed program as well as recent BACB data (see [US Employment Demand for Behavior Analyst 2010-2020](#)). This program clearly offers innovative and high-quality design features in addition to rare opportunities for local or state-wide prospective students in particular. We believe this proposed program capitalizes on the strengths of existing personnel and resources and it also offers opportunities to bring new talent to the institution.