Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis

Program Development Plan

February, 2020

**1. Designation of the new degree program, rationale for that designation, definition of the focus of the program and a brief description of its disciplinary purpose and significance**.

One of the most widely used evidence-based interventions to improve socially significant behavior in humans is Applied Behavior Analysis. A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) is a professional who has completed extensive, in-depth graduate-level training in behavioral principles and procedures, as well as supervised mentoring in applying these skills to benefit people throughout their lifetime. BCBAs receive this nationally recognized certification through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Between 2010-2017, **the national annual demand for Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) increased 800%** (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2018).

BCBAs deliver behavior analytic services to individuals across the lifespan in settings such as early intervention centers, homes, schools, alternative educational settings, nursing homes, residential facilities, and businesses. Many individuals receiving Applied Behavior Analytic services will have at least one medical diagnosis such as Autism Spectrum Disorder or a severe emotional or behavioral disorder, however this is not a requirement to be able to benefit from this versatile technology.

The proposed **100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis** program delivers a comprehensive, highly specialized course sequence that imbues the theoretical and practical foundations of Applied Behavior Analysis. Students gain a comprehensive understanding of foundational behavioral principles and procedures, as well as advanced behavioral technologies like Functional Behavioral Assessment, Practical Functional Assessment, and Functional Analysis, that extends well beyond traditional classroom management.

The designation of the proposed program as a **Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis recognizes that Applied Behavior Analysis is a science**. Throughout the proposed program, students are immersed in behavior analytic literature, experimental design, intervention implementation, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. The designation as a Master of Science program also aligns with prospective students' desire to have Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis appear on their diploma. In fact, this is one criterion that many prospective students look for when choosing a master's degree program to prepare them for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination.

The 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program also includes a culminating experience in a practical setting during the final summer of the program during which students must demonstrate the full range and depth of behavior analytic skills learned during the program. This project is overseen and evaluated by Kent State University faculty who are also practicing BCBAs.

The proposed 100% Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program **aligns with the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's current (2014-2021) and future (2022-2029) coursework and degree requirements** to be eligible to apply to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination. This means that students graduating from this program will have their educational requirements pre-approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board when they apply to sit for the Board Certified

Behavior Analyst Examination. This is a major factor that drives students' choice of where to complete the educational requirements to be eligible to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

**2. Description of the proposed curriculum including identification of any specializations intended to appear on the student transcript (see Section IV).**

The proposed 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program consists of 10 3-credit graduate courses (30 hours total) and can be completed in 14 months. Nine of the 10 courses in the program currently exist and have been offered for the last 10 years as a part of the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program or as a part of the Special Education core in one of the many Special Education master's degree programs. Because the 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree program will continue to be recognized by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board as a Verified Course Sequence, students graduating from this program will have their educational requirements pre-approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board when they apply to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination. The following 10 courses comprise the proposed 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program:

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|---|---|---|
| SPED 63300 | Research Applications in Special Education | Summer |
| SPED 63201 | Contemporary Issues in Special Education | Summer |
| SPED 53030* | Applied Behavior Analysis I | Fall |
| SPED 63301* | Single Subject Research Methods | Fall |
| **SPED 63033**\* | Ethical and Professional Conduct in Applied Behavior Analysis | Fall |
| SPED 53031* | Applied Behavior Analysis II | Spring |
| **SPED 63031**\* | Program Development in Applied Behavior Analysis | Spring |
| **SPED 63034**\* | Concepts and Principles in Applied Behavior Analysis (new course) | Spring |
| **SPED 63032**\*+ | Advanced Interventions for Addressing Severe Behavior | Summer |
| **SPED 64892**+ | Advanced Practicum | Summer |

\* Denotes courses approved by the BACB as covering required content      + = **Only after all other courses completed; Must be taken together**

Upon approval, the five courses unique to the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis (bolded and underlined above) will have their programmatic designation changed to ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis). For example, SPED 63033 would become ABA 63033.

**3. Description of a required culminating, or integrated learning, experience.**

The culminating experience in the 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree program will include the co-requisite SPED 63032 (ABA 63032) Advanced Interventions for Addressing Severe Behavior and SPED 64892 (ABA 64892) Advanced Practicum courses. After all other degree coursework is completed, and during the final summer of their program, students will spend six weeks in a setting where Applied Behavior Analytic interventions are used the majority of the time. Most frequently, this will be an Applied Behavior Analysis therapy clinic or school. In their approved setting, Kent State University graduate students will be working with a preschool through high school age student eligible for Applied Behavior Analytic services. During the experience, Kent State University

faculty who are also practicing BCBAs supervises students. We're fortunate to have five part-time instructors that will continue to meet this need. Each one is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and has been teaching and supervising in the current Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program for the past 4-10 years.

Using scientific behavior analytic principles, behavior analytic literature, single subject experimental design, and intervention implementation, students will conduct a Functional Analysis. Students will collect data, analyze the data, and interpret the results. This project is presented to and evaluated by Kent State University faculty who are also practicing BCBAs.

Because the proposed Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis will be delivered 100% online, it is possible that students from outside Northeast Ohio will enroll. In this case, their culminating experience will be supervised by a BCBA in their local area, but will be monitored remotely by Kent State University faculty who are also practicing BCBAs. Because there is a national shortage of BCBAs, the model of remote supervision is a widely used technology that has been successfully implemented for the past 10 years within the current Behavior Intervention Specialist Certificate program. It takes advantage of the stringent requirements imposed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board for BCBAs who supervise students who are working toward becoming BCBAs. These requirements include being a BCBA or BCBA-D (doctoral level), completing an 8-hour supervision curriculum, and completing 4 hours of continuing education on the topic of supervision during each two-year credential recertification cycle.

**4. Administrative arrangements for the proposed program: department and school or college involved.**

The proposed 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree program would be housed in the Special Education program in the School of Lifespan Development and Educational Sciences in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services.

**5. Evidence of need for the new degree program, including the opportunities for employment of graduates. This section should also address other similar programs in the state addressing this need and potential duplication of programs in the state and region.**

- Between 2010-2017, **the national annual demand for Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) increased 800%** (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2018).

- Between June, 2017 and May, 2018, there were **9,186 job postings nationally** that required or preferred BCBA certification.

- In 2019, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board reported that there were **6,072 newly certified BCBAs**.

- On **January 1, 2022, changes** by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board will add coursework and field experience required to be eligible to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination.

- In order to remain a Behavior Analyst Certification Board Verified Course Sequence, the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate Program **would need to be expanded to 24 credit hours**. It's unlikely graduate students would choose to complete a 24-hour certificate program.

- This presents the opportunity to **combine resources that currently exist** within the Special Education program to create one a highly desirable degree in a rapidly developing field that enables students seeking the Board Certified Behavior Analyst credential to acquire two requirements in one program (i.e., graduate degree in a Behavior Analyst Certification Board-approved field and coursework the Verified Course Sequence).

- Having a single degree program that allows students to obtain the necessary educational requirements to be eligible to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination would also allow Kent State University to **streamline and focus program advertising** as we compete with other programs around Ohio and nationally.

- Current students in the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program, as well as students in the General Special Education master's degree program who intend to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst would be transferred to the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program. **The Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program would be discontinued**. The General Special Education master's degree would remain an option for students with a goal other than becoming a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

- As it is configured, a **100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis** degree program would be a **unique offering in Ohio** for students seeking specialized training in this area. In addition to Kent State University, there are six universities in Ohio that offer a certificate or graduate degree that focuses on Applied Behavior Analysis. However, **none of the existing programs would be duplicated by the proposed program in name, delivery format, and completion timeline**:

    o Bowling Green University – 100% online **certificate** in Applied Behavior Analysis
    o Cleveland State University – 100% online BCBA Program; **six courses**
    o The Ohio State University – **in person Doctor of Philosophy** in Applied Behavior Analysis; **in person Master of Arts** in Educational Studies and Special Education – can specialize in Applied Behavior Analysis
    o University of Cincinnati – 100% online **Master of Education** in Foundations of Behavior Analysis; completed in **20 months**
    o University of Dayton – 100% online **Master** of Applied Behavior Analysis; **Department of Counselor Education and Human Services**; began Fall, 2019; **42 credits**, **two year program**
    o Youngstown State University  - **in person** Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis; housed in the **Psychology** department

- A major factor that drives students' choice of where to complete the educational requirements to be eligible to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst is the first-time pass rate on the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination for program graduates. The average **first-time pass rate** for the **life** of the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate Program is **89%**. The average **national** first-time pass rate over the same time period is **64%**.

- Of the seven universities in Ohio that offer a certificate or graduate degree that focuses on Applied Behavior Analysis, their **2018** first-time pass rates for their students are as follows:

    o Bowling Green University – No test takers
    o Cleveland State University – No test takers
    o Kent State University – 75% (8 test takers)
    o The Ohio State University – 83% (6 test takers)
    o University of Cincinnati – 55% (183 test takers)
    o University of Dayton – No test takers; program began Fall, 2019
    o Youngstown State University  - No test takers
    Note: Data are only reported for programs that have six or more students take the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination in a year. Additionally, no data are reported for programs in their first four years of operation.

**6. Prospective enrollment.**

The 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program would admit graduate students who have earned a bachelor's degree in **any field of study** while earning a 3.0 or better grade point average. This is possible because by including the Verified Course Sequence within the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree program, students will receive all of the foundational Applied Behavior Analytic content required to be eligible to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination. Currently, the majority of students in the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program are Intervention Specialists working in public school settings. All but a few are Ohio residents.

It's anticipated that Everspring will become a strategic partner in nationally advertising the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree program. This could result in a dramatic increase in graduate student enrollment. Initially, however, enrollment will decrease in the General Special Education Masters degree program. This is the master's degree program that students currently use to piece together the degree and course work requirements they need to be eligible to apply to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination. However, after current students in the General Special Education master's degree and Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate programs are moved to the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program, the overall number of graduate students enrolled in Special Education graduate programs is expected to increase.

**7. Special efforts to enroll and retain underrepresented groups in the given discipline.**

The 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree program will be advertised to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Given the interactive nature of the online courses, students would become part of a connected, highly focused, supportive group of students all working toward a common goal. Everspring will also be a strategic partner in enrollment management and student retention.

**8. Availability and adequacy of the faculty and facilities available for the new degree program.**

Over the past 10 years that the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program has been offered, the courses have been taught by a combination of tenure track, non-tenure track, and part time faculty members in the Special Education program. The following faculty will continue their roles in the newly created 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program:

- Christine Balan, PhD, **BCBA**     **Advisor**, Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate Program
  **Advisor**, Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis
  Program (moving forward)

  Special Education Faculty, **Non-Tenure Track**

- Pena Bedesem, PhD            Special Education Faculty, **Tenure Track**
- Andrew Wiley, PhD            Special Education Faculty, **Tenure Track**
- Jennifer Sweeney, PhD, **BCBA-D** Special Education, **Part-Time Faculty**
- Nichole Williams, MA, **BCBA**    Special Education, **Part-Time Faculty**
- Rosemarie Griffin, MA, **BCBA**    Special Education, **Part-Time Faculty**
- Carrie Yasenosky, MA, **BCBA**    Special Education, **Part-Time Faculty**
- Stacy Cianciolo, MA, **BABC**     Special Education, **Part-Time Faculty**

One of the current part-time faculty members who is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst will be contracted to teach the one new course (SPED XXXXX Concepts and Principles in Applied Behavior Analysis) that has been added to the proposed Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program. Instructional technology available through Blackboard will continue to support the delivery of the 100% online program proposed. In addition, it is anticipated that Everspring will add resources and support.

**9. Need for additional facilities and staff and the plans to meet this need.**

Because the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program will be delivered 100% online, no additional facilities will be needed. The immediate need will be for one part-time instructor who has the Board Certified Behavior Analyst credential. As it stands, several part-time instructors have been a longstanding component of the current Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate and are eager to teach more courses for the program. If enrollment in the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program increases dramatically, additional part-time faculty members who have the Board Certified Behavior Analyst credential will be needed.

**10. Projected additional costs associated with the program and evidence of institutional commitment and capacity to meet these costs.**

The immediate additional cost associated with the proposed 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program is approximately $4746. This represents the salary paid to one additional part-time faculty member who has the Board Certified Behavior Analyst credential. Even if the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program was not being developed, the additional course would need to be added to the Behavioral Intervention Specialist Certificate program in order to make it eligible to keep its status as a Verified Course Sequence though the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Therefore, the additional cost will be zero.

Please see Financial Impact statement included as an attachment.

To:     Dr. Maria Zaragoza, Chair, Psychological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences
From:  Dr. Mary Dellmann-Jenkins, School Director, Lifespan Development and Educational
        Sciences
        Dr. Christine Balan, Professor and Coordinator of the Behavioral Intervention Specialist
        Certificate Program
Date:   February 25, 2020

**RE: Establishment of a new degree: Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis**


The School of Lifespan Development and Educational Sciences is creating a 100% online Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree. The degree includes a comprehensive, highly intensive course sequence that infuses the scientific, theoretical, and practical foundations of Applied Behavior Analysis. In addition, the proposed program aligns with the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's current coursework and degree requirements to be eligible to apply to sit for the Board-Certified Analyst Examination.

The proposed title for the new graduate degree is Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

As listed in the attached Program Development Plan, the degree includes course from Special Education.

We anticipate moving forward with College Curriculum Committee approval in March and EPC approval in April 2020.

If you have any concerns and/or questions regarding the establishment of the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis degree, please contact either of us by March 13, 2020 or sooner. cbalan@kent.edu, 2-0595 or mdellman@kent.edu 2-6958; Thank you.