

BACKGROUND AND REQUEST

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
Master of Science in Applied Behavioral Analysis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

This program clearly meets Regents' standards for graduate degree programs. The Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study voted unanimous approval for the new program. RACGS advised Youngstown State University to add statistical training in the proposed curriculum, and Youngstown State University representatives agreed to provide the necessary faculty for master's level statistical training.

Request: Youngstown State University requests new degree authority for a Master of Science in Applied Behavioral Analysis.

Program Purpose/Mission: The proposed Master of Science in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) will provide behavior analysts in Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania with an opportunity to earn a graduate degree in a program that combines academic instruction with practical, real-world experience. The program will apply the basic principles of the field to human behaviors of clinical and social significance. It is designed for those interested in graduate study in behavior analytic theory and practice leading to national certification as Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA). It will provide a program in the Northeast Ohio/Western Pennsylvania region that thoroughly prepares graduates for the practice of applied behavior analysis with various human populations in real-world settings.

The M.S. in ABA is distinct from other graduate programs in psychology in Northeast Ohio because of its focus on behavior analytic theory and practice. Graduates will be able to find employment opportunities as system-level consultants or in correctional institutions, retirement facilities, and rehabilitation centers. In addition, the proposed program is flexible enough to accommodate students interested in enrolling part-time. In this way, students can maintain their current employment while advancing their education and future employment opportunities. Also, these students will be less dependent on assistantships for success in the program.

Enrollments: It is estimated that six students will be enrolled into the program per year, initially, and that students will complete the program in 4-5 semesters. After approximately one year, YSU should be able to increase enrollment to about 12 students each year. The program is expected to accommodate both full and part time students.

Curriculum: The proposed program will require 42 semester hours of graduate level study: 24 semester hours in behavior analytic coursework, 12 semester hours of practical experience in field settings, and up to 6 hours of thesis for a total of 42 credit hours. During the program review, institutional members of the 'Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study' (RACGS) advised YSU to provide statistical training in the proposed program, and YSU representatives agreed to provide the necessary faculty for master's level statistical training. The course offerings and heavy emphasis on practical experience with diverse populations meet the certification requirements of the Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB). It is anticipated that many of the

prospective students will be employed in a variety of human-service settings as direct-care staff and consultants. Graduate courses will be offered as needed (e.g., afternoon, evening and summer sessions) to accommodate students wishing to maintain full-time employment while pursuing graduate study. Student research and theses projects will be supervised by behavior analysis faculty members and oriented toward the scholarly integration of theory and practice.

Faculty, Facilities and Resources: The Department of Psychology has sixteen full-time faculty members, four of whom will constitute the core faculty of the Applied Behavior Analysis program. Currently, all four are members of the graduate faculty, and three are Board Certified Behavior Analysts. The current course load for core faculty is 22-24 semester hours per academic year. The proposed course load for graduate faculty in the program is 18 semester hours per academic year. Given the demand for applied behavior analysts and graduate training thereof, the proposed program can reasonably expect to hire an additional faculty member in the near future. As noted in the above curriculum requirements, the Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study members recently advised YSU to provide statistical training in the Master of Science in Applied Behavioral Analysis program, and YSU agreed to make the necessary faculty provisions. No additional office space is needed to facilitate the program. The holdings of Maag Library and the journals available through OhioLink will provide the necessary resource materials.

Evidence of Need: There is substantial student interest among current psychology majors for an advanced degree in psychology. The department has an undergraduate minor in behavior analysis and the course sequence is approved for meeting the requirements for behavior analysis certification at the associate level. In the past year, as a result of YSU listing on the BACB website as a site for undergraduate training, YSU has received numerous inquiries from students in Ohio and surrounding states interested in graduate education at YSU. Currently, there are no universities in Northeast Ohio offering graduate training in behavior analysis. This is problematic because the field is growing at a rapid pace and demand for applied behavior analysts in human service settings currently is not being met. Nationally, membership in the international Association for Behavior Analysis has doubled since 1997, and there currently are 81 programs in the U.S. offering behavior analysis training, and 8 online programs.