

Program Abstract – Form A

Proposed Degree Title: Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

1. Description: The proposed degree, a MS in ABA, is a 30 unit, online graduate program that will be run through Extended Learning. This degree program will embed our current advanced certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis (18 units) that is offered online through Extended Learning.

The Applied Behavior Analysis Certificate Program began in January 2015. It includes two track options. The first option is the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) Track, an 18-unit program that meets the 270 contact hours of graduate-level instruction required and approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). This track takes all 6 courses offered in this program. The second track option is the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) Track, a 12-unit program that meets the 180 contact hours of graduate-level instruction required and approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. This track takes the first four courses of the program. We have offered two admission dates per year (January and July). We are currently enrolling for our 6th cohort to begin in July 2017. Each cohort has a BCBA track and a BCaBA track. At any given time, we are running 3 cohorts. Each cohort has between 20-30 students. We have been able to reach a regional, national, and international audience. All courses are offered online.

The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) is the board that grants us course sequence approval. This March, we were granted our renewal until March 31, 2018. If a student is seeking their BCBA or BCaBA, we can provide them the approved coursework that will go toward their certificate. The BACB is the body that will grant them this certification (after supervised practicum and a board exam).

The BACB has recently changed their requirements to obtain a BCBA. We use these requirements to set our admission criteria in the BCBA track, which is our most popular track. The newly revised BACB requirements are as follows:

“Applicants must possess a minimum of a graduate degree (e.g., master’s or doctoral) in an acceptable field of study from a qualifying institution. Acceptable fields of study are behavior analysis, education, or psychology. Degrees may also be accepted from degree programs in which the candidate completed a BACB approved course sequence. Applicants who are unsure of whether the field of study of their degree is acceptable may request a preliminary review.” (BACB)

In addition, the BACB has mentioned that soon they will require all applicants to hold a master’s degree in the field of behavior analysis (including applied behavior analysis) and will not longer accept other degrees.

We have had numerous students inquire if our online certificate includes a MS in ABA where they can also complete a BACB approved course sequence. Our response is, “no,



not yet, but soon!” We lose many applicants who are seeking BOTH their MS in ABA and BACB approved course sequence in an online format.

As we already have 6 (3-unit) approved graduate level courses, we could easily add a few more courses and a culminating experience to turn this certificate program into an online MS in ABA. The proposed program of study is below:

Existing Coursework:

- ABA 601: Foundations and Concepts in Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- ABA 602: Behavior Analysis Processes for Behavior Change (3 units)
- ABA 603: Applied Behavior Analysis Applications for Complex Procedures and Promoting Behavior Change (3 units)
- ABA 604: Classroom Management, Instructional Methods, and Ethical Consideration in Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- ABA 605: Applied Behavior Analysis in Autism Spectrum Disorder (3 units)
- ABA 606: Ethics and Professional Conduct for Behavior Analysis (3 units)

Possible Proposed Coursework:

- ABA 607: Functional Behavior Assessments and Functional Analysis in Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- ABA 608: Supervision and Competency Issue for Behavior Analysis Programming (3 units)
- ABA 609: Research Methods – Experimental Analysis of Behavior Applications to Applied Behavior Analysis (3 units)
- ABA 610: Culminating Experience – Comprehensive Exam (3 units)

TOTAL 30 units

2. Mission: CSUSM’s Mission states: “The university offers rigorous undergraduate and graduate programs distinguished by exemplary teaching, innovative curricula, and the application of new technologies.” This proposed MS in ABA is a reflection of rigorous curriculum with the depth and breadth of content knowledge and skills to meet the standards of practice for entry-level behavior analysts. The courses are online and designed with innovative teaching to prepare students to practice in a wide variety of settings.

Currently 6 CSU campuses offer Masters or Certificate programs in ABA including: Fresno, Los Angeles, Monterey Bay, Northridge, Sacramento, and Stanislaus. However, ALL of these programs are face-to-face programs. We would be the ONLY CSU with an online MS in ABA with approved course sequence embedded.

3. Demand: Recent statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identify approximately 1 in 88 American children as being diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum – a ten-fold increase in prevalence in 40 years. With the dramatic increase in

children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), there is incredible need for evidence-based methodologies and strategies to support individuals with ASD and their families. Strategies and methodologies incorporating Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) are recognized as effective and evidence-based, meaning research indicates that children with autism develop skills and reduce inappropriate behavior when receiving treatments based in Applied Behavior Analysis.

Behavior analysts provide services to individuals, families, group homes, schools, mental health agencies, hospitals, industrial and business settings, and other agencies working with individuals who require intensive behavioral training and/or consultation. Special populations such as individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities have been shown to benefit greatly from ABA services. ABA is also frequently used in the field of education for both neuro-typical students and students with disabilities. Behavior analyst professionals are strongly encouraged by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board to pursue Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) or Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) certification. BCBA and BCaBA are considered the industry standards in this field and these certifications are nationally and internationally recognized. In order to become a BCBA, you must hold a master's degree in behavior analysis, psychology, or education. The BACB has proposed to soon require ALL applicants to hold a master's degree in behavior analysis (including applied behavior analysis). Therefore, there will be increased demand for an MS in ABA.

Currently 34 states have insurance mandates for Applied Behavior Analysis treatment for children with ASD. Five other states are currently in process of creating this mandate. In 2014, the Affordable Health Care Plan is to include ABA programming for Autism Spectrum Disorder services for all 50 states. Currently there is a significant shortage of professionals to support these upcoming programs. Nationally there are hundreds, if not thousands, of ABA companies and school districts that are constantly looking for professionals who are BCBA's or BCaBA's. In addition, 48 countries now recognize certificates from the Behavior Analysis Certification Board, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the UK. Without a doubt, there is a national and international need for professionals trained and certified in ABA.

4. Resources: The ABA certificate program currently runs out of Extended Learning and currently has operational support of advising and staff support. The proposal is to keep the MS in ABA in Extended Learning utilizing the existing certificate program resources. Thus it would remain a fully self-support program, not requiring state funds. We currently have 1 tenure-track faculty member (Dr. Jodi Robledo, BCBA, SOE) and 5 adjunct lectures. Additional hires will be needed to support this degree proposal. The program will not require classroom space, as it is fully online. Courses online require IT and Library support as students will be accessing course materials and readings and interacting through Moodle.

Currently our CSUSM has online access to full-text of the journals we required for this program:

Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis

Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior
Psychological Bulletin
The Behavior Analyst Today (Free Online)
Behavior and Social Issues
Analysis and Intervention in Developmental Disabilities

5. Relation to Existing Programs: The Autism Spectrum Disorder Added Authorization Program and the Special Education Credential Program from the School of Education covers some content related to Applied Behavior Analysis. However, these existing programs are designed for teachers and/or teacher candidates. The proposed certificate program is much more advanced and is tied directly to the Behavior Analyst Certification Board for individuals who are seeking university approved coursework to prepare them to become Board Certified Behavior Analysts or Behavior Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts. It may be the case that potential students are attracted to both programs and they will be able to obtain multiple credentials, certificates, and degrees to better prepare themselves to work in a variety of setting within schools, homes, public and private agencies and the community.

The proposer will also meet with the Psychology Department and Human Development Department to determine if a similar program is in process. Most likely this proposed program or any of the proposed courses do not exist or conflict with other courses or programs in these departments.

This degree proposal provides a career avenue for many students majoring in Human Development, Psychology, Education, and Liberal Studies. As we do not require a bachelor's degree in the field, it enables applicants with alternative backgrounds. We plan to have strong collaborations with faculty in all of these departments and provide education to students regarding career options within our field.