

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

**NO.: AAC 08-07**

**BOARD DATE:** January 11, 2008

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**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the Articles of Amendment of **Western New England College** to award the **Doctor of Philosophy in Behavior Analysis**.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact: Aundrea Kelley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Policy

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
December 2007

**Western New England College**

Doctor of Philosophy in Behavior Analysis

**INTENT**

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education received Western New England College's petition to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Behavior Analysis in January 2007. The proposed program seeks to provide advanced training to researchers, teachers, and practitioners in the education and treatment of individuals with autism and related disabilities. The College intends this program to be a post-master's degree program focusing on advanced research training and on the application of principles of behavior analysis. The proposed program will train students for academic and research careers, as well as careers in the delivery of behavior analysis services. The proposed program was developed to meet the standards of the Association for Behavior Analysis, the major professional organization for Behavior Analysts.

**INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW**

Western New England College was founded in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1919. Begun as the Springfield Division of Northeastern College, the College was originally established to offer part-time educational opportunities for adult students in law, business, and accounting. In 1951 an autonomous charter was obtained to grant and confer the degrees of Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Laws, and the Springfield Division of Northeastern University was renamed Western New England College. Most recently, the Board approved Western New England to award the LL.M. in Estate Planning and Elder Law in February 2007. The College is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Western New England College currently offers more than 30 undergraduate programs through the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Business, and Engineering. Graduate programs are offered in the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Business, and Engineering. The School of Law offers full- and part-time J.D. programs as well as a part-time LL.M. program.

**ACADEMIC AND RELATED MATTERS**

*Admission Requirements*

Admission will be based on review of academic and professional credentials, letters of recommendation, and documentation of Board-Certified Behavior Analysis certification. Up to six semester-hours of credit earned beyond the

master's level may be transferred into the program upon prior approval of the Program Director and the faculty teaching the equivalent course. The specific admissions requirements are listed below:

1. Master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis;
  2. Master's degree program GPA of 3.6 or higher for full admission; provisional admission if GPA is between 3.25 and 3.6;
  3. GRE score combined verbal and quantitative of 1.100 with neither score below 500 for full admission; provisional admission if either score is less than 500 (the GRE requirement may be waived at the discretion of the Admissions Committee in exceptional cases);
  4. Vita reflecting supervised experience in ABA;
  5. Three letters of recommendation;
  6. Personal statement specifying faculty and research interest; and
  7. Interview.

While any student can apply to the proposed program, Western New England College developed a special contractual relationship with employees at the New England Center for Children (NECC), which will be the primary field placement and research site for students. According to the contract, WNEC agrees that the first six students admitted to each cohort each year will be qualified NECC employees. If NECC has fewer than six qualified employees, then qualified non-NECC-employee candidates may fill the remaining spaces in the cohort. Students enrolled in the proposed program, who are current NECC staff, will be able to use NECC clients as research participants, and NECC will provide the appropriate qualified supervision.

## *Projected Enrollments, Tuition, and Fees*

Western New England College plans for the program to remain small and selective. The College currently projects the following enrollment model, culminating in an enrollment of a total of 24 students by year 5.

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Total Enrollment
Year 1	4	--	--	--	--	4
Year 2	4	6	--	--	--	10
Year 3	4	6	6	--	--	16
Year 4	4	6	6	6	--	22
Year 5+	--	6	6	6	6	24

## *Graduate Tuition Charges*

Tuition \$ 534 per credit hour

Room and Board	\$8,890 annually
Technology Fee	\$137 per semester
Student Activity Fee	\$150 per semester

### *Curriculum (Attachment A)*

The proposed Ph.D. program will require 54 semester hours beyond the master's degree. The program will include 27 hours of seminars and 27 hours of dissertation research. All students will be expected to maintain at least 20 hours per week of employment in a supervised clinical practice or research setting during the program.

Students will be required to successfully pass a comprehensive examination, which may take one of two forms. Either the student will develop a comprehensive reading list and respond orally to questions from a faculty panel, or the student will write and submit a publication-quality review paper.

Dissertation requirements will include a written proposal, a written dissertation, and a dissertation oral defense.

All program requirements, including dissertation and dissertation defense, must be completed within a seven-year time limit.

### *Governance*

Administration of the program will be the responsibility of the Chairperson of the Psychology Department. The Chairperson will appoint and oversee a full-time, tenured or tenure-track Program Director and will appoint and supervise all program adjunct faculty with the assistance of the Program Director. Adjunct faculty appointments will be for a three-year period, and faculty compensation will be determined according to Western New England College policy.

The Program Director is to oversee the program and coordinate the Program Committees. The Program Committees will consist of:

- *Recruitment and Marketing* to oversee student recruitment and program marketing.
- *Admissions* to develop admissions materials, establish application review procedures, and coordinate application reviews.
- *Student Evaluation* to coordinate student evaluations.
- *Program Evaluation* to develop program quality indicators and seek accreditation from the Association for Behavior Analysis.
- *Individual Dissertation Committee*, serving as student dissertation committee members.

## **RESOURCES**

### *Physical Resources*

Office and research space for the Program Director of the proposed program will be available in the Psychology Department. Students will have office space at their respective field placement sites.

The New England Center for Children (NECC)—a private, nonprofit organization serving children with autism and other related disabilities—is to serve as the primary field placement and research site for students. Existing physical resources at NECC have been allocated to the proposed program, including computing resources. A computer room at NECC, containing 10 personal computers, black-and-white and color laser printers, and video editing equipment, is available for student use.

### *Library Resources*

Western New England College library resources will be available to all students. WNEC is a member of the Cooperating Libraries of Greater Springfield (CLGS). Through CLGS, students can search the holdings of libraries of eight college libraries in the greater Springfield area, including Western New England College D'Amour and Law Libraries, and Springfield City Library. Western New England College students have borrowing privileges at all CLGS libraries according to each library's own policies.

The New England Center for Children also maintains a library that will be available for student use. The NECC library contains a collection of highly specialized books and journals related to behavior analysis, as well as autism and related developmental disabilities. Complete sets of the major journals in the field (e.g., *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, etc.) are available.

## **EVALUATION**

The proposed program was evaluated by a visiting committee comprised of Team Chair, Mark W. Steege, Ph.D.; Janet K. Ellis, Ph.D.; Linda J. Parrott Hayes, Ph.D.; and Philip Chase, Ph.D. The site visit took place from May 10 through May 12, 2007. The visiting committee stated that the proposed program has clear strengths and would be distinctive in the field of behavior analysis, noting the high demand for new doctoral students. The committee suggested that the proposed program could produce very high quality students to fill the gaps not addressed by other Ph.D. granting institutions.

The visiting committee was also in agreement that the proposal would be strengthened by developing program standards that would clearly demonstrate

the role of WNEC in delivering the doctoral program vis-à-vis its relationship with the New England Children's Center (NECC). The visiting committee had concerns about the program's complex relationship with NECC. As the program is designed, NECC would be both employer and educator in the clinical, research, and academic setting for many of the students. The visiting committee recommended a number of administrative strategies to protect students' interests and mitigate potential conflicts of interest between NECC and the College. The recommendations include the following:

- Clarify the procedures for admissions of NECC employees.
- Clarify the contractual agreement with NECC in order to diversify the content of the proposed program and develop additional practical training sites outside of NECC.
- Develop policies and procedures to protect the interests of students given the multiple roles of many of the faculty involved in the program.

In response, the College introduced secondary advisors to the admissions process who would have no employment supervision over the applicant. WNEC clarified in its contractual agreement that research and fieldwork that could not be found at NECC could be located elsewhere and is committed to developing alternative research sites. In order to protect students' interests, the College will also require that all students be appointed secondary advisors, such that one advisor should have no employment supervision responsibility of the student. Concerning programmatic aspects of the proposed program, the visiting committee made the following observations:

- admissions standards be made more explicit and raised.
- the College commit to hiring more full-time faculty prior to implementing the program and requires that dissertation committees are comprised of a greater composition of full-time faculty.
- more attention should be paid to teaching a diverse area of behavioral populations and problems.
- the degree titled be changed to Ph.D. in Behavior Analysis from Applied Behavior Analysis.

Per the recommendations of the visiting committee, the College raised the GPA requirement from 3.25 to 3.6. In addition, Board Certification or a previous master's degree in applied behavior analysis will be a necessary criterion for application. WNEC expressed its commitment to hiring an additional faculty member in 2008 whose area of interest will diversify the curriculum and changed the dissertation committee composition to include at least two full-time faculty members out of a required four. Finally, WNEC changed the degree title to a Ph.D. in Behavior Analysis.

In addition to the above recommendations, the visiting committee made a number of minor recommendations concerning syllabi and course content, all of

which have been adequately addressed by the College to the satisfaction of the visiting committee. The visiting committee noted that the College adequately clarified its original proposal and is poised to deliver the program with integrity.

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

The required public hearing was held on November 29, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. in the Board of Higher Education's offices. No comments were offered in opposition to the proposed programs.

### **STAFF ANALYSIS and RECOMMENDATION**

The staff has thoroughly evaluated all of the materials submitted by Western New England College and finds that the proposal meets the requirements for NEASC-accredited institutions outlined in 610 CMR 2.08. Recommendation is for approval of the College's petition to award the Doctor of Philosophy in Behavior Analysis. Only Western New England College may advertise for, recruit into, offer admission to, enroll students in, and offer this Doctor of Philosophy in Behavior Analysis program.

## Attachment A: Curriculum Outline

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>
<b><i>Major Required (Core) Courses (Total courses required = 5)</i></b>		
PSY610	Professional Issues, Ethics, and Research Design	3
PSY620	Experimental Analysis of Behavior	3
PSY630	Descriptive and Inferential Statistics	3
PSY640	Quantitative Analysis of Behavior	3
PSY650	The Philosophy of Behaviorism	3
	Subtotal # Core Credits Required	15
<b><i>Concentration Courses (Total courses required = 4 minimum)</i></b>		
PSY705	Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention	3
PSY720	Assessment of Severe Behavior Disorders	3
PSY735	Organizational Behavior Management	3
PSY740	Developmental Psychology	3
PSY770	Teaching in the College Environment	3
PSY750	Advanced Verbal Behavior	3
PSY790	Special Topics in Behavior Analysis	3
	Subtotal # Concentration Credits Required	12 (to 21)
<b><i>Dissertation Courses (Total courses required = 9 min)</i></b>		
PSY851-6	Dissertation Research Seminar 1 (3 credits x 3-6 semesters)	9 (to 18)
<b><i>Behavior Analysis Practica (Total courses required = 9)</i></b>		
PSY801-9	Behavior Analysis Practicum	1 ea. term (x9)
<b><i>Other/Elective Course Choices (Total courses required = 0)</i></b>		
PSY857-9	Dissertation Continuation <sup>1</sup>	1
<b><i>Curriculum Summary</i></b>		
Total number of courses required for the program		24
Total credit hours required for program		<b>54</b>

<sup>1</sup> Students not finished by the end of Year 3 register for Dissertation Continuation each semester until completion of all degree requirements.