Grant Proposal for The Commission on the Extended University

Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis at California State University San Marcos

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Recent statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identify around 1 in 88 American children as 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 autism and their families. The National Autism Center launched a project in 2005 with the support and guidance of an expert panel composed of nationally recognized scholars, researchers, and other leaders representing diverse fields of study. The culmination of this rigorous multi-year project was the National Standards Report, the most comprehensive analysis available to date about treatments for children and adolescents with ASD. Within this report, strategies and methodologies incorporating Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) were deemed highly recommended, meaning the research indicated that children with autism developed skills and reduced inappropriate behavior when receiving treatments based in Applied Behavior Analysis.

Currently 34 states have insurance mandates for ABA treatment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Five other states have this mandate in process. In 2014, the Affordable Health Care Plan is to include ABA programming for autism services for all 50 states. Currently there are not enough trained professionals to support these upcoming programs. Without a doubt, there is a national and international need for professionals trained and certificated 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. Training and consultation are performed in the areas of educational and adaptive living strategies, challenging behaviors, and staff management. Special populations such as individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities have been shown to benefit greatly from ABA services. ABA is also frequently used in the field of education from typical students to students with disabilities. Behavior analysis professionals are strongly recommended to pursue BCBA® certification by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board. This is the industry standard and is nationally and internationally recognized.

The Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) is an independent practitioner who also may work as an employee or independent contractor for an organization. The BCBA conducts descriptive and systematic (e.g., analogue) behavioral assessments, including functional analyses, and provides behavior analytic interpretations of the results. The BCBA designs and supervises behavior analytic interventions. The BCBA is able to effectively develop and implement appropriate assessment and intervention methods for use in unfamiliar situations and for a range of cases. The BCBA seeks the consultation of more experienced practitioners when necessary. The BCBA teaches others to carry out ethical and effective behavior analytic interventions based on published research and designs and delivers instruction in behavior analysis. BCBAs supervise the work of Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA) and others who implement behavior analytic interventions.

The Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB) awards this credential to individuals who have met coursework, degree, fieldwork and examination requirements. Requirements for the BCBA Certification include: A bachelor's and a master's degree in behavior analysis or related fields and approved by the BACB from a fully accredited institution of higher learning; 225 classroom hours (online or campus) of graduate level instruction; 1500 hours of supervised independent fieldwork in behavior analysis; and a passing score on the BCBA exam.

Nationally there are hundreds, if not thousands, of ABA companies and school districts that are constantly looking for professionals with BCBA’s and/or BCaBA’s. Currently the Cal State System offers numerous ABA, BCBA, and BCaBA certificate programs. However, none of these programs are offered completely online. California State University San Marcos has recently collaborated with ACES (Autism Community and Education Services), a well-respected company that provides ABA services to individuals with autism and their families throughout the United States. Together, we are currently working on developing an 18-unit online Applied Behavior Analysis Certificate Program. This community partnership is critical to CSUSM developing a national reputation for providing training in Applied Behavior Analysis. This grant will allow us to develop this needed program for our community – regional, national, and international.