

**Request for Authorization to Establish a
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology
(Ph.D., CIP 42.0101) at
University of North Carolina at Wilmington**

I. Program Highlights

- Designed to generate professionals who will develop and deliver empirically-supported treatments for severe and persistent cognitive and behavioral disorders in underserved and diverse populations in North Carolina and nationally.
- Emphasis areas in substance abuse/psychopharmacology; developmental disabilities/behavior analysis; dementias/cognition and aging; mental illness in corrections/forensic psychology.
- Option to pursue Spanish Language proficiency and Graduate Certificate in Spanish
- Required doctoral clinical internship
- 20 full-time students projected at steady state
- 103 post-baccalaureate hours are required for individuals to become eligible for licensure as a Health Services Provider and for the program to meet eligibility requirements for accreditation with the American Psychological Association (APA)
- Resource needs to launch the program are for graduate stipends and psychological assessment materials.

II. BOG Academic Program Planning Criteria (UNC Policy 400.1)

1. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** NC State University, UNC Chapel Hill, and UNC Greensboro offer the PhD in Psychology. UNC Charlotte and East Carolina University offer the Ph.D. in Health Psychology. ECU, UNC-CH, UNCC, and UNCG each provided letters in support of UNCW's proposed doctoral program noting the critical need for providers in the state, particularly in the emphasis areas of the proposed program.
2. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** The proposed program aims to meet high need areas in behavioral health, commensurate with faculty expertise, and to not duplicate existing UNC programs. It aligns with UNC Wilmington's strategic plan, *Soaring to Greatness*, in several ways, including the development of innovative approaches to regional engagement, growth of graduate education and research, and increasing diversity. UNC Wilmington's current mission statement permits a limited number of doctoral programs and will need to be revised upon approval of this degree program.
3. **Demand (Local, regional, state).** In 2012-2013, 170 APA-Accredited Clinical PhD programs existed in the U.S., with an average acceptance rate of 7.8%. In 2013-2014, acceptance rates for UNC institutions ranged from 3-14%, indicating strong interest in PhD programs in North Carolina. Approximately 75% of the 122 UNCW psychology majors responding to an interest survey indicated high interest in pursuing a PhD. They were also asked to indicate areas within psychology that they want to study at the graduate level. Approximately 91% of the 114 who answered the question indicated interest in at least one of the specialization areas proposed for the program. In the last five years, applications to UNCW's MA program have steadily increased to 161 in 2014, indicating continued and growing interest in graduate study at UNC Wilmington.

4. **Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** Support letters from UNC institutions confirm that the need is greater than what is met by existing programs. Also, several letters discussed the breadth of behavioral health issues and that it is more cost effective to provide training within a program that already has the necessary expertise rather than to expand expertise in an existing degree program.
5. **Employment Opportunities for Graduates.** A 2013 report of the NC Department of Health and Human Services found that 1/3 of NC residents are in need of mental health services and 1/5 experience chronic psychological distress. The report also showed that NC is lower than the national average for psychologists per capita and that the shortage in rural areas is acute. Nearly ¼ of NC counties lacks a psychologist. According to the US Department of Labor, projected job growth for psychologists is high (20-28%) through 2020. These jobs have a national median salary of approximately \$72,000 per year. Job growth for psychologists in NC was projected at 12% with a median salary of \$69,000 a year. At the time the proposal was written, NCWorks listed 56 job postings for “psychologist.” The proposal also included extensive quantitative evidence of the need for psychologists who specialize in the four emphasis areas of this proposed program, one of which is mental illness in corrections/forensic psychology. The Department of Public Safety, which provided a support letter, indicated 30 positions were available for “highly trained doctoral-level psychologists” in April 2015.
6. **Faculty Quality and Number.** The psychology department has 35 full-time faculty members, 31 of which have graduate faculty status and will contribute to the program. As a group, the faculty has over 870 publications and has received over \$6 million in sponsored awards in the last ten years. The faculty has mentored over 300 graduate students to completion of a master’s thesis.
7. **Availability of Campus Resources (library, space, etc.).** In 2012, the Psychology Department moved into a new, state-of-the-art laboratory and classroom building sufficient to implement the program. Library holdings and information technology services are adequate to serve the program.
8. **Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** Existing graduate courses in psychology will comprise approximately 75% of the proposed program. UNC Wilmington’s graduate programs in Gerontology, Education, Social Work, and Sociology and Criminology will also be valuable in support of the proposed program.
9. **Impact on Access and Affordability.** The proposed program would be especially attractive for potential students in the southeast region of the state.
10. **Expected Quality.** In addition to their active research agendas, the participating faculty have held numerous leadership positions in state, regional, national and/or international research and clinical organizations. Twenty have won teaching and/or graduate mentorship awards.
11. **Feasibility of Collaborative Program.** The proposed program will collaborate with Foreign Languages and Literatures to develop appropriate Spanish language proficiency in students who choose to pursue that option.
12. **Other Considerations.** None.

III. Summary of Review Processes

UNC General Administration Review Process and Feedback. UNCW first submitted proposal documents to UNC General Administration for this program in 2008. Review was delayed due to a moratorium on new program proposals during the economic downturn and then by an extensive mission review process in 2013. In addition to review by UNC General Administration, six external reviewers read the proposal in 2012. As a whole, the external reviews were positive and mentioned several strengths: availability of talented applicant pool; employment opportunities for graduates; quality of faculty; curriculum content and design. They raised some questions regarding the Spanish language requirement. UNCW changed this to an option to seek a proficiency certificate. They also inquired about the ability to sustain an experimental track, which UNCW excluded in later drafts of the proposal. Finally, some external reviewers inquired about the ability and interest to maintain a strong master's program.

In August 2015, the UNC Graduate Council reviewed the proposed program and voted unanimously in support of the proposal moving forward in the review process. The UNC Graduate Council asked clarifying questions around the number of students UNCW expects to attract from its existing master's program, whether direct admission into the Ph.D. from baccalaureate study will be allowed, and how they would address course-level enrollments if interest in any of their four emphasis areas was small. UNCW noted that in the most recent year, fifteen of their master's graduates went on to doctoral study, some expressing interest to stay if UNCW had offered doctoral study. UNCW will allow admission to the Ph.D. program from both baccalaureate and master's programs. UNCW will monitor course-level enrollments in the various tracks and make decisions to mitigate issues and ensure appropriate numbers as needed.

Benefits of program approval include a non-duplicative degree program that serves a critical state need and that can be achieved without significant additional resources. For these reasons, we do not recommend any alternatives to implementing the degree program.

IV. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve University of North Carolina at Wilmington's request to establish a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree program (CIP 42.0101) to enroll students starting Fall 2016.