

**Request for Authorization to Establish a
Doctor of Psychology
(Psy.D., CIP 42.0101) at
Appalachian State University**

I. Program Highlights

- The Appalachian State University Department of Psychology proposes a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) in Clinical Psychology. The program is designed to train practicing psychologists to provide scientifically informed and culturally competent behavioral health services, particularly to individuals living in rural North Carolina. Program graduates would be trained to provide evidence-based assessments and interventions for individuals, families, and communities in underserved areas of the state. The program would meet accreditation standards of the American Psychological Association (APA) to prepare graduates for independent professional health care practice.
- Preparation for independent practice is particularly important for future program graduates serving in rural NC because the current license for master's level psychologists in NC (Licensed Psychological Associates [LPAs]) requires supervision by a doctoral-level licensed psychologist, of which there are few in rural areas of the state. In addition, the APA identifies the doctoral degree as the entry-level degree for psychology practice.
- The proposed Psy.D. program is being developed in ongoing consultation and collaboration with Western Carolina University. These campuses share a mission in serving the broad, rural western region of North Carolina and their respective doctoral degree proposals and current master's level programs share common elements as well as clear distinctions. The Appalachian State proposal for a Psy.D. focuses on rural health psychology and offers applied training elements that will not be duplicated at WCU. In turn, the WCU emphasis on school-aged individuals will include many child-oriented and school-oriented components that will not be duplicated in the Appalachian State training programs. However, the inter-institutional collaboration established by the WCU-Appalachian State Memorandum of Understanding would include joint coursework, field placements, research supervision, and other scholarly activities.
- Appalachian State is well-poised to meet the training needs for a rural behavioral health workforce in NC. The program has a strong tradition of training practitioners (including ~100 applications per year for the M.A. clinical program), is located in and serves a rural community, has strong relationships with existing agencies, and houses unique community-based training opportunities (e.g., school-based mental health programs and a Psychology Clinic). The Appalachian State Psychology clinic, staffed by a full-time Psychology Clinic director, Dr. Jacqueline Hersh, provides assessment and therapy training opportunities for graduate students, services to rural consumers, and revenue to the department.

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

1. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** North Carolina schools that currently train doctoral psychologists eligible for licensure as health service providers produce only a fraction of the psychologists needed by the state. For the 2014-2015 academic year, 29 psychology doctoral degrees were awarded in NC (excluding non-practice psychology doctorates): East Carolina University = 4, Duke University = 8, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte = 4, the University of

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North Carolina at Chapel Hill = 9, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro = 4. Similar psychology doctoral programs offered in NC report receiving a large number of applications for admission in 2015: ~160 (UNC Charlotte), 122 (East Carolina), 226 (UNC Greensboro) and 571 (UNC-Chapel Hill). The established programs in NC each admit an average of 4-7 applicants per year, suggesting that there will be no shortage of well-qualified applicants for additional doctoral programs in the state. Importantly, without an increase in degree production, NC will continue to experience severe shortages of doctoral-level psychologists. Access to mental and behavioral health services for NC residents will likely be even more acute in rural areas of the state given that master's level clinical psychologists require career-long supervision by a doctoral-level psychologist

2. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** The proposed Psy.D. program in Clinical Psychology is highly consistent with the Appalachian State University Strategic Plan (July 2014 – June 2019), *The Appalachian Experience: Envisioning a Just and Sustainable Future*. A Psy.D. program focused on training future practitioners to serve rural citizens is directly inspired by “our location in the distinctive Appalachian mountain town of Boone, North Carolina” that “profoundly shapes who we are.” Appalachian State University’s mission as a regional comprehensive university includes preparing “students to lead purposeful lives as engaged global citizens who understand the responsibilities in creating a sustainable future for all.”

The Appalachian State University mission statement states “as a constituent institution of the UNC system, we fulfill our core academic missions of teaching, scholarship, and service in ways that honor our geography and heritage.” The proposed Clinical Psychology Psy.D. program clearly honors our rural Appalachian geography and heritage. Students and faculty will serve the local rural community in the context of clinical training, and will conduct meaningful applied community-based scholarship. Adding a Psy.D. program to the department would allow for vertical mentorship, and enrich the academic, research, and applied learning opportunities offered to undergraduate students

3. **Demand (local, regional, state).** The NC Department of Commerce projects a 12% employment growth rate for psychologists from 2012 to 2022 and states that job prospects will be “best for those who have a doctoral degree in an applied specialty” (NCworks.gov, 2016). Clinical psychology is generally characterized as a “growing” occupation, with demand outweighing supply. The NCworks.gov database indicates that there are 156 annual openings for Clinical Psychologists in NC. On the specific day of August 18, 2016, 51 job openings were listed at this website, with only 18 potential Clinical Psychologist candidates identified as looking for work; of those seeking employment, only 5 resided in rural NC (as designated by The Rural Center, 2016). However, nearly a third (n = 15) of the job listings at this snapshot were listed across 10 rural counties.

According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, “the demand for clinical and counseling psychologists will increase as people turn to psychologists to help solve their problems. More psychologists will be needed to help people deal with issues such as depression and other mental disorders, marriage and family problems, job stress, and

addiction. Psychologists will also be needed to provide services to an aging population, helping people cope with the mental and physical changes that happen as they grow older. Psychological services are also needed for veterans suffering from war trauma, for survivors of other trauma, and for individuals with autism. Demand for psychologists in the healthcare industry is also expected to increase because their collaborative work with physicians, social workers, and other healthcare professionals provides patients with comprehensive, interdisciplinary treatments. In addition to treating mental and behavioral health issues, psychologists will be needed to work on teams to develop or administer prevention or wellness programs.” (bls.gov, 2014).

4. **Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** Please see #1 above for information about existing programs. As has been noted, the existing programs are highly competitive, with demand far exceeding the number of students accepted. Appalachian State has collaborated with both the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) and Western Carolina University (WCU) while simultaneously seeking permission to plan psychology doctoral programs. Western Carolina and UNCW also recognize the state-wide deficit of demand versus production of doctoral-level psychologists, and are aware of the APA’s stance on the doctoral degree as the entry-level degree required for the practice of psychology. Accordingly, UNCW was recently granted permission to establish a Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology. Given that Appalachian and WCU share a geographical and cultural heritage, and both institutions are seeking permission to develop professional Psychology doctoral programs (i.e., Psy.D.) those campuses have developed a Memorandum of Understanding for mutual and collaborative student training support (e.g., shared online course in History and Systems of Psychology; shared practicum sites). For example, Appalachian currently houses unique school-based mental health programs at three rural schools; these sites can provide rich training opportunities for both ASU and WCU Psy.D. candidates. As noted above, the proposed program does not duplicate any program currently offered in NC. Along with curricular requirements for APA accreditation, the program is uniquely designed for rural and Appalachian cultural competence.

Employment Opportunities for Graduates. As noted in #3 above, demand is high. According to the U.S. Department of Labor-Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov, 2016), employment for clinical, counseling, and school psychologists is anticipated to grow at a rate of 19.6 percent between 2014 and 2024. Thus, it is estimated that approximately 30,500 additional positions for such psychologists will be available between years 2014 and 2024 in the U.S. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has noted that “candidates with a doctoral or specialist degree and post-doctoral work experience will have the best job opportunities” (bls.gov, 2014). The current mean annual wage of these human-service psychological positions is estimated at \$70,580 (bls.gov, 2016).

5. **Faculty Quality and Number.** The department has 33 full-time, tenure-track doctoral-level faculty members all of whom are members of the graduate faculty. The size of the core clinical faculty (n = 8) is consistent with national benchmarks (Stewart, Roberts, & Roy, 2007). Core tenure-track members of the clinical faculty are all NC Licensed Psychologists and Health Service Providers. They are also accomplished

scholars with a mean publication rate of 3.0 peer-reviewed scholarly products per year.

- 6. Availability of Campus Resources (library, space, etc.).** The Appalachian State University psychology department is large, including 31 tenure track Ph.D. faculty, five NTT faculty, seven graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), ~ 900 undergraduate majors, and ~ 70 graduate students. Securing adequate space for office, laboratories, and classrooms has been an ongoing challenge. As a historical strategy, Appalachian State has converted classrooms into offices, moved laboratories to other buildings, and secured shared larger classrooms in other buildings that are controlled by the College of Arts and Sciences. With the exception of the Appalachian State Psychology Clinic, they have been able to keep faculty and GTA offices within Smith Wright Hall to promote collaboration, collegiality, and a healthy work environment. The addition of a Psy.D. program will not create a space deficit, but will add to the challenge. The ASU Psychology Clinic will need a significant addition of space to accommodate increased services, storage space, and classrooms.

Library resources for graduate curricula and research in Psychology have been well-supported over the past 20 years, including with book, journals, and supporting online resources, such as for psychological testing, online citation, and clinical streaming videos. The Library's resources in Psychology are comparable to those at other institutions in the UNC system and are therefore able to meet the needs of a Psy.D. program, though additional allocations be directed to Psychology as needed. The library is dedicated to continuing to support programs and research in Psychology, especially this Psy.D. Program, with appropriate library collections and services.

- 7. Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** Appalachian's Psychology Department anticipates continued educational, clinical, and research interactions with other departments and programs including Human Development and Psychological Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy, Sociology, Anthropology, Appalachian Studies, Reading Education and Special Education, and the university's Counseling and Psychological Services Center. Moreover, clinical/educational offerings and opportunities have been realized with disciplines that are part of the newly formed College of Health Sciences and Allied Professions (e.g., Health and Exercise Science, Social Work, and Communication Disorders).
- 8. Impact on Access and Affordability.** As noted above, the establishment of the doctoral program will ensure greater access to mental health services for the citizens of the Appalachian region through the increased number of qualified practitioners being trained through the Psy.D. program. Given the highly selectivity of doctoral programs in North Carolina (about 2% of applicants actually matriculate), this will provide much needed seats for qualified applicants.
- 9. Expected Quality.** As noted above, the proposed Psy.D. program is designed to meet APA Standards of Accreditation in health service psychology. Accredited programs are required to publicly disclose information on program enrollment including time to completion, attrition, program costs, internship placement, and licensure status of

graduates. The following metrics will be used in an ongoing manner to evaluate the program:

- Applicant information including, but not limited to, number of applicants, quality of applicant pool (e.g., average GRE scores, average GPAs, applied and research experience, references), diversity of applicant pool, NC residency, connection with rural communities, and interest in rural behavioral health service provision.
- Entered student information including, but not limited to, total number of students, mean and median number of years to complete the program, attrition, grievances and outcomes, internship placements, number of M.A. and Psy.D. degrees conferred, percentage of graduates licensed (including average scores on the EPPP), and job placement (with particular attention to placement in rural and underserved communities).
- Program information including, but not limited to, student costs, institutional support and resources (e.g., student funding, space), program policies and procedures, a demonstrated sequential and cumulative training program (including coursework, practicum, and research), a commitment to individual differences and diversity, creation of a supportive and collegial learning environment, and an active integration of science and practice.
- Faculty information including, but not limited to, program leadership, administration and management, faculty qualifications, and faculty availability to serve as role models for student socialization into the discipline and profession.
- Student learning outcomes
 - o Discipline-Specific Knowledge
 - o Profession-Wide Competencies

10. Feasibility of Collaborative Program. As noted above, discussions with Western Carolina State about possibilities of collaboration have been ongoing since the inception of each respective degree proposal.

11. Other Considerations. None.

III. Summary of Review Processes

Campus Review Process and Feedback The original proposal was approved by all departmental, college, and university-level curriculum committees, was signed by former Chancellor Kenneth Peacock, and was submitted to UNC-GA on April 28, 2010. Internal and external administrative changes delayed consideration of the program proposal. Ongoing consultation has been sought from the graduate school, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Provost and the UNC-GA resulting in a change to the degree proposed (from Ph.D. to Psy.D.). The following campus bodies reviewed and recommended this program:

- Psychology Department, January 2008 (original Ph.D. proposal; 24 yes, 0 no)
- College of Arts & Sciences, March 2008 (unanimous)

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- Appalachian State University Graduate Council, April 2008 (unanimous)
- Appalachian State University Academic Policies & Procedures committee, April 2008 (12 yes, 0 no; 1 abstention)
- Modifications were approved by the Appalachian State University Graduate Council, March 2010 (unanimous)
- Modifications were approved by the Appalachian State University Academic Policies & Procedures committee, April 2010 (15 yes, 0 no)
- Modification, degree change to Psy.D., Psychology Department, December 2015 (22 yes, 2 no, 1 abstention)

UNC General Administration Review Process and Feedback. The Request to Plan was thoroughly reviewed and discussed by the 17-member UNC Graduate Council at its April 2017 meeting. Following a presentation by Appalachian State faculty and discussion, the Council voted to recommend that it be authorized to submit a Request to Establish. Subsequent to the submission of the Request to Establish, the proposal was sent to three external reviewers, all of whom are faculty and/or administrators of nationally ranked programs in professional psychology with expertise in relevant areas. The three reviewers concurred on the quality of the proposal, the high demand for doctoral-prepared psychologists in the areas of focus, and on the qualifications of the faculty. Excerpts from the reviews:

“The program proposal for a Rural Clinical Psychology doctoral (PsyD) training program is exciting. There is a clear need for increasing numbers of doctoral-prepared Clinical psychologists with expertise in rural mental health, and the proposed program at ASU would be one of the few in the nation. Further, this program is ideally geographically located. It is in a rural area of North Carolina, where students will be able to gain specialized clinical training in rural mental health, and it is located closely enough to other Clinical psychology doctoral programs that resources can be shared. The collaborative relationship with Western Carolina University, documented in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by both institutions, allows for sharing of classes (e.g., a combined Ethics course delivered over the web) and clinical training opportunities. ASU has tremendously strong relationships with various mental health service agencies and schools which support clinical practicum training for Master’s students.”

“Overall, this is an excellent and well considered proposal for a new PsyD program in Clinical Psychology at Appalachian State University. It appears that efforts have been made to seek consultation and support from others in the state, in academia, and outside the state so that the program is best primed for success.”

“Given the longstanding provision of a master’s degree in clinical psychology, moving to a doctor of psychology program seems to be a natural evolution. There appears to be sufficient support and infrastructure within the institution to move to the provision of a doctoral degree. There is sufficiency of faculty members who are core to the program. Each of the core faculty members represents a diversity of clinical and research expertise. They will serve as very strong role models for doctoral students given their scholarly productivity and licensure status.”

Appalachian State responded to all questions and concerns raised by the external reviewers.

IV. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve Appalachian State University's request to establish a Doctor of Psychology in Health Service Psychology: Combined Clinical/School (Psy.D) degree program (CIP 42.2899) to enroll students starting August 2019.