

# Association for Behavior Analysis International Accreditation Board

## Site Visit Report University of Kansas Master of Arts in Applied Behavioral Science Doctor of Philosophy in Behavioral Psychology

### Site Visitors

John C. Borrero, Ph.D., University of Maryland, Baltimore County  
James E. Carr, Ph.D., Auburn University—Lead Site Visitor

### Mission

The program's mission statement was provided as part of the self-study: *The mission of the graduate program in behavior analysis is to train scientist-practitioners and researchers in the discovery and production, translation and application, and communication of knowledge in the behavioral sciences for understanding and solving problems of societal importance. To achieve this mission the program offers a Master of Arts in applied behavioral science and Doctor of Philosophy in behavioral psychology. In both degree programs, the department requires (a) a sequence of courses that integrates the basic principles of behavior (i.e., the experimental analysis of behavior), experimental methods and research design, and conceptual foundations with (b) training in basic, applied, and intervention research (i.e., applied behavior analysis).*

### Site Visit

The two-member team arrived on campus on Thursday morning, January 29 and concluded the visit on Friday afternoon, January 30. Drs. Gregory Madden, Claudia Dozier, and Edward Morris submitted a self-study in advance of the visit, arranged for accommodations and meeting space at the time of the visit, and responded to all requests for additional materials in a timely manner. All members of the core faculty were hospitable and forthcoming in response to questions.

To prepare this report, the site visitors read the institution's self-study, including course syllabi and faculty vitae; reviewed student theses and dissertations; and spoke with current students in the program, core program faculty, the department chair, and the college associate dean, among others.

### Program Structure and Requirements

The Applied Behavioral Science (ABS) department at the University of Kansas (KU) offers a Master of Arts in Applied Behavioral Science and a Ph.D. in Behavioral Psychology and is housed within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Each student is admitted to the program under a specific advisor who is responsible for providing direction to and supervision of that student. This supervision is conducted using a *junior colleague model* in which the relationship between student and advisor is one of mutual respect

as characterized by the relationship between any colleagues with differing amounts of knowledge and training within a discipline. The advisor mentors the junior colleague by meeting weekly with him/her, discussing professional opportunities, and reaching consensus on the direction of study and research the student will pursue.

To encourage students to make consistent progress toward their degree, they complete an annual self-report of progress. This report is prepared by the student, reviewed by the faculty advisor, and submitted to the Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC) at the end of each academic year. Each report is evaluated by the GCC over the summer and returned to the student at the beginning of the fall semester.

Graduate students are expected to attend regularly scheduled proseminars at which graduate students and visiting scholars present the results of their research. In weeks when no proseminar is scheduled, several of the faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students attend a reading/discussion group at which contemporary articles published in behavior-analytic journals are discussed.

Students in the MA program are required to complete the following courses.

<b>Course Content</b>	<b>Course Number</b>	<b>Course Title</b>
Principles of Behavior	ABSC 796	Laboratory in Behavioral Development and Modification
Within-Subjects Research Methodology	ABSC 735	Within-Subjects Research Methodology and Direct Observation
Conceptual Matters	ABSC 798	Analysis of Behavior II: Conceptual Foundations, Advanced Principles and Contemporary Issues
Conceptual Matters	ABSC 841	Legal, Ethical, and Professional Issues in Applied Behavioral Science
Behavioral Interventions	ABSC 861	Applied Behavior Analysis
Research/Intervention Practicum	Numerous Listings	
Master's Thesis	ABSC 899	Master's Thesis in Applied Behavioral Science

Master's program students are also required to conduct an empirical, behavior-analytic thesis, successfully defend it, and present the results at the department's proseminar.

Within one year of defending the Master's thesis, students must satisfy a qualifying exam requirement, which has recently been revised. Students are given up to three opportunities to pass the exam. If a student does not pass it within one year of the master's thesis defense, or after

three opportunities, the student will be dismissed from the program. The requirements for the qualifying exam may be completed in one of two ways: (a) an APA formatted research proposal paper or (b) a research grant proposal. If a student elects to complete option “a,” the student’s advisor selects four topics with which the student should be familiar or in which the student has expressed interest. The student is then permitted to select one topic and prepare a research proposal. A student is permitted 7 days to complete the proposal. If a student selects option “b,” the document should follow relevant funding agency requirements (e.g., NIH, NSF).

Students pursuing a doctorate must complete one course in each the following four course content categories (students are allowed to take these post-master’s courses before having completed their qualifying exam):

<b>Course Content</b>	<b>Course Number</b>	<b>Course Title</b>
Principles and Conceptual Foundations	ABSC 821	Behavior Analysis of Child Development (no longer offered after 2006)
Principles and Conceptual Foundations	ABSC 890	Special Topics Course <sup>1</sup>
Principles and Conceptual Foundations	ABSC 921	History and Systems of Psychology
Principles and Conceptual Foundations	ABSC 931	Verbal Behavior
Principles of Behavior	ABSC 900	Self-control, Impulsivity, and Human Addictive Disorders
Principles of Behavior	ABSC 935	Experimental Foundations of Applied Behavior Analysis
Advanced Research Methods	ABSC 710	Community Health and Development
Advanced Research Methods	ABSC 940	Measurement and Experimental Design for Applied Research
Applied Behavior Analysis	ABSC 788	Designing Early Education Environments
Applied Behavior Analysis	ABSC 805	Functional Behavioral Assessment
Applied Behavior Analysis	ABSC 961	Advanced Seminar in Applied Behavior Analysis
Research/Intervention Practicum	Numerous Listings	
Doctoral Dissertation	ABSC	Doctoral Dissertation in Behavioral Psychology

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<sup>1</sup> Special Topics courses have included topics such as: (a) Self-control, Impulsivity, and Human Addictive Disorders, (b) Behavior Analysis in Developmental Disabilities, and (c) Applied Behavior Analysis in Educational Settings.

After completing the qualifying exam requirement, doctoral students must conduct an empirical, behavior-analytic dissertation, successfully defend it, and present the results at the department's proseminar.

## FACULTY

The ABS department includes 18 faculty members, 7 of whom hold full-time appointments. As a whole, the department's faculty members are routinely engaged in high-quality scholarly activity, community outreach, and service delivery. In the last 5 years, full-time faculty members have published a total of 43 journal articles, 7 book chapters, 2 edited books, and 2 books. Faculty members and their students routinely present their research at national and state professional conferences including ABAI. In addition to being productive, the faculty members appear to work in a collegial and supportive atmosphere. The department's faculty members are listed below.

### Faculty with Full-Time Appointments

Claudia Dozier, Ph.D., BCBA, is an assistant professor who received her doctorate in behavior analysis from University of Florida in 2006. Her primary interests include autism, functional analysis of problem behavior, conditioned reinforcement, and early childhood education. Dr. Dozier is currently on the editorial board of *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*.

Gregory Madden, Ph.D., is an associate professor who received his doctorate in psychology from West Virginia University in 1995. His primary interests include behavioral economics, self-control/impulsivity, and animal models of gambling. Dr. Madden recently completed a 6-year term as associate editor of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* and currently serves as the director of graduate training.

Keith Miller, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in sociology from University of Illinois in 1961. His primary interest is in the area of program survival. Dr. Miller is the author of *Principles of Everyday Behavior Analysis*.

Edward Morris, Ph.D., BCBA, is a professor who received his doctorate in developmental psychology from University of Illinois in 1976. His primary interests are history and theory and the conceptual analysis of behavior. Dr. Morris is currently on the editorial boards of *The Psychological Record*, *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Theory*, and *The Behavior Analyst*. Dr. Morris currently serves as the department chairman.

Pamela Neidert, Ph.D., BCBA, is an assistant professor who received her doctorate in behavior analysis from University of Florida in 2007. Her primary interests are the assessment and treatment of problem behavior, developmental disabilities, and early intervention and prevention.

Jan Sheldon, Ph.D., J.D., is a professor who received her doctorate in developmental and child psychology from University of Kansas in 1974 and her juris doctor from University Kansas in 1977. Her primary interests are community integration of individuals with developmental disabilities, early childhood autism treatment, and treatment of problem adolescents.

James Sherman, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate from the University of Washington in 1964. His primary interests are in the community treatment of autism and developmental disabilities.

#### Faculty with Part-Time Appointments

Bridget Biggs, Ph.D., is an assistant professor who received her doctorate in clinical child psychology from University of Kansas in 2005. Dr. Biggs has a 50% appointment in the department and is also affiliated with the doctoral program in Clinical Child Psychology.

Stephen Fawcett, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in developmental and child psychology from University of Kansas in 1974. Dr. Fawcett has a 35% appointment in the department and is also affiliated with the university's Work Group for Community Health and Development.

Charles Greenwood, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in educational psychology from University of Utah in 1972. Dr. Greenwood has a 10% appointment in the department and also serves as the co-director of Juniper Gardens Children's Project.

Yo Jackson, Ph.D., is an associate professor who received her doctorate in clinical child psychology from University of Alabama in 1995. Dr. Jackson has a 50% appointment in the department and is also affiliated with the doctoral program in clinical child psychology.

Lynn Marotz, Ph.D., is an assistant professor who received her doctorate in higher education and policy and administration from University of Kansas in 1996. Dr. Marotz has a 50% appointment in the department and also serves as the associate director of the Edna A. Hill Child Development Center. Dr. Marotz has entered phased retirement.

Michael Roberts, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in clinical psychology from Purdue University in 1978. Dr. Roberts has a 50% appointment in the department and is the director of the doctoral program in clinical child psychology.

George Semb, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in child psychology and human development from University of Kansas in 1972. Dr. Roberts has a 50% appointment in the department and has entered phased retirement.

Ric Steele, Ph.D., is an associate professor who received his doctorate in clinical psychology from University of Georgia in 1998. Dr. Steele has a 50% appointment in the department and is also affiliated with the doctoral program in clinical child psychology.

Eric Vernberg, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in clinical psychology from University of Virginia at Charlottesville in 1988. Dr. Vernberg has a 50% appointment in the department and is the associate director of the clinical child psychology program.

Steven Warren, Ph.D., is a professor who received his doctorate in developmental and child psychology from University of Kansas in 1977. Dr. Warren serves as the Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies.

Glen White, Ph.D. is a professor who received his doctorate in child developmental and psychology from University of Kansas in 1991. Dr. White has a 50% appointment in the department.

## **STUDENTS**

Forty-four graduate students are currently enrolled in the department: 42 in the doctoral program and 2 in the master's program. This distribution illustrates the department's prioritization of doctoral-level training. From 1997 to 2007 the department received approximately 40 applications per year. This figure rose to 62 in 2008 and 55 in 2009. The faculty attribute the increase in some part to the addition of Drs. Madden, Dozier, and Neidert, each of whom has received a large number of applications.

Since 2003, the median time to complete the master's degree has been 3 years (range, 1-9). Since 1999, the median time to complete the doctoral degree (after entering the program) has been 6 years (range, 3 to 23). The extreme ranges in years to graduation appear to be a function of historical factors, with most recent cohorts graduating in a timely manner. For example, the department has graduated 76 students with doctorates since 1999. The first 38 of these students took an average of 9.8 years (range, 4 to 23) to graduate after admission. However, the most recent 38 students only took an average of 5.3 years (range, 3 to 10) to graduate.

The site visitors interviewed 11 graduate students about their experiences in the program. Overall, the students appeared to be quite positive about the program. The students indicated that the coursework was rigorous and stimulating. Several students who had taken graduate courses at other universities remarked that the courses at KU were taught at a higher level, with more opportunities for critical discussion. Students also spoke positively about the availability of research resources (e.g., space, faculty time and oversight) and described the program as having a culture that valued and supported research activity. Students also seemed appreciative of the range of quality practicum sites available for learning applied skills (and research), although the range of practicum sites available to each student appears to be different across faculty advisors. In general, students appeared to appreciate the program's high standards and felt they were well prepared for impending employment. Finally, the students described the interpersonal atmosphere in the program as collegial, indicating that faculty and students were frequently supportive of one another and that competitive behavior between students was rare. This was evident in the professional and positive manner in which students provided information about the program to the site visitors. Dr. Roberts, the director of the clinical child psychology program, remarked about the high quality of students in the ABS programs. Our brief experience with a sample of the program's graduate students is consistent with his opinion.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

### Administrative Support

The site visitors interviewed Dr. Barbara Romzek, associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Although Dr. Romzek acknowledged that the transition from the original Department of Human Development and Family Life to the current Department of Applied Behavioral Science was at times difficult, she appeared to be quite positive about the change and the department's new direction. At one point in the interview, Dr. Romzek remarked that "the department used to be one that I worried about. But now it isn't." She seemed especially pleased with some of the recent changes in the program, including more of a collective responsibility for graduate admissions and better graduate student mentorship. Both of these changes have resulted in a reduction in time to graduation, which Dr. Romzek clearly values. It is the opinion of the site visitors that time to graduation will likely further improve in the years ahead. Overall, Dr. Romzek acknowledged that the program fills a specialized niche in the training of behavior analysts and appeared to be supportive of that role.

### Space

The site visitors toured a sample of the program's facilities, which appear to be adequate for most of its needs. The program has access to sufficient classroom space for seminars and lecture courses. Faculty offices are reasonably sized and adequate for the program's current needs. The program has sufficient space for a number of research and practicum activities, including infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms in the Child Development Center, an animal laboratory, and off-campus sites such as Juniper Gardens Children's Project and Community Living Opportunities. Graduate students appear to have office space in their research laboratories or at their practicum sites.

Two space limitations were identified. First, the department is developing two intensive early intervention classrooms/clinics for children with autism spectrum disorders. These empirically validated services are desperately needed in Kansas and represent an important opportunity for the University of Kansas to conduct rigorous research while providing an important, potentially high-profile, community service. The space available for these classrooms and clinic is not adequate and some of the rooms that are available are in need of significant renovation.

A second space limitation is the animal laboratory in which NIH-funded behavioral economic research is being conducted. That space is at capacity with no room for expansion. This limits the lab's ability to attract additional extramural funding.

### Library

The library has numerous behavior-analytic texts and journals, including *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, *Journal of Behavioral Education*, *The Behavior Analyst*, *Behavior Modification*, *Behavioral Interventions*, *Behavior Therapy*, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, among many others. The only behavioral journals the site visitors were unable to locate were *The Analysis of Verbal Behavior*, *The Behavior Analyst*, and *Behavior Analysis in Practice*. Resources not held by the university library can be obtained via interlibrary loan. It is our

opinion that KU library resources relevant to behavior analysis are more than sufficient for graduate training purposes.

#### Graduate-student Funding

The majority of graduate students appear to be funded on teaching and research assistantships. These positions include tuition waivers and a monthly stipend. This level of funding appears to be competitive with other similar graduate training programs.

### **QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS**

It is the opinion of the site visitors that the master's program in Applied Behavioral Science and doctoral program in Behavioral Psychology at the University of Kansas meet or exceed the requirements for accreditation by the Association for Behavior Analysis International. The programs appear to accomplish the department's stated mission to train "... researchers and scientist-practitioners in the discovery, translation, and application of knowledge toward solving human behavior problems of societal importance."

### **COMMENDATIONS**

The ABS faculty members are commended for the curricular changes made since the last accreditation visit. The coursework, theses and dissertations, qualifying exam standards, and practicum and internship experiences are all appropriately rigorous for quality graduate training. In the opinion of the site visitors, the program is among the top behavior analysis training options in the U.S.

The faculty is also to be commended for developing and maintaining a collegial and supportive environment for both faculty and graduate students. Furthermore, relations between the behavior analysis faculty and clinical child faculty appear to be quite positive. Such positive relations are sometimes difficult to manage when two different groups are housed within the same administrative structure.

The program is commended for successfully hiring such high-quality faculty members in recent years. Drs. Dozier and Neidert (and somewhat less recently, Dr. Madden) have substantially strengthened the program's experimental research focus and made important contributions to program, departmental, and university service.

The department chair and graduate training director, Drs. Morris and Madden, respectively, have provided exceptional leadership and guidance in recent years during periods of significant change. The transition from the Department of Human Development and Family Life to the Department of Applied Behavioral Science was not an easy one, but what resulted was a program with a more consistent focus. Furthermore, recent changes in program requirements (e.g., qualifying exams, annual student reviews, course restructuring, interview weekend) have resulted in a more streamlined, yet rigorous, training experience for students. Drs. Morris and Madden are to be commended for so capably guiding the department and program through these challenges.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The site visitors offer the following recommendations to assist the applied behavioral science faculty and administration at KU in their ongoing efforts to further improve their already impressive program.

*Recruit a New Tenure-Track Professor.* We strongly encourage the program to request an additional faculty member for the program. The ABS faculty provided evidence that the treatment of autism was the most common professional interest of applicants to the graduate program. The existing faculty have done an admirable job of beginning to address this need, but competing obligations prevent any faculty member from exclusively focusing on this high-demand area. Recruiting a new faculty member who is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst<sup>2</sup> and who specializes in autism treatment would address this sustained need. Alternatively, recruiting a faculty member with a different area of expertise (e.g., early childhood education) to whom existing faculty duties could be offloaded would allow current faculty members who have specialized training in autism to devote additional efforts to autism treatment.

The second, and more important, reason to add another faculty member is to better distribute service and administrative responsibilities across faculty members. It is our opinion that the program's non-tenured faculty members are heavily involved in departmental and university service (perhaps too involved) and, while commendable, this is a potential risk toward tenure-earning research productivity and possibly to faculty retention. An additional faculty member, especially someone at the associate or full professor rank, would be able to relieve the non-tenured faculty of some of their existing internal service obligations.

We reiterate that whomever is hired to join the ABS faculty should be a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. The overwhelming demand for graduate study in the department is from students who wish to conduct research and provide behavioral services to individuals diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. These future ABS graduates must be regularly supervised by Board Certified Behavior Analysts if they are to sit for the BACB exam. Currently the department has only three Board Certified Behavior Analysts on the faculty and only two of these provide supervision to ABS graduate students working in applied settings. Thus, the supervisory burden placed on these two non-tenured faculty members is yet another undue burden which inhibits their ability to publish and recruit extramural funding.

*Strategic Planning.* The department has expended considerable time and effort getting the program to where it is today. Now it is time for the department to strategically plan its future. To this end, we recommend the faculty schedule a retreat to address at least four issues. First, the faculty should generate a long-range strategic plan for the program's growth and maintenance. This strategic plan should recognize that several of the existing full-time ABS faculty members will be retiring within the next decade. The plan should specify a) the course offerings that will need to be filled and student mentorship responsibilities that will need to be covered given these

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<sup>2</sup> Board Certified Behavior Analysts hold doctoral degrees in Psychology or Behavior Analysis, have completed extensive supervised internships, and have passed a certification exam provided by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board ([www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)).

imminent retirements, b) the growth areas in behavior analysis for which the department anticipates future demand (e.g., behavioral gerontology, autism, behavioral pharmacology), and c) the opportunities for new growth areas that an innovative department will address (e.g., applied behavioral neuroscience).

Second, the retreat would be an opportunity to develop a multi-year schedule of course offerings to assist students in their course planning for a timely graduation. Finally, the faculty retreat would be a good opportunity to discuss the utilization of junior faculty members in committees and other department and university service initiatives and the impact of such efforts on progress toward tenure.

*Clarify Promotional Materials.* The distinction between the master's and doctoral programs is unclear in the program's promotional materials (e.g., web site, brochure). We recommend the promotional materials reflect the fact that students may a) enter the master's program with no intention of pursuing a Ph.D., b) enter the master's program with an intention to reapply to the doctoral program immediately afterward, or c) enter directly into the doctoral program. Such clarity will assist applicants in making better decisions about the KU program and increase the visibility of the master's-only option within the discipline.

*Better Prepare Graduate Students for Teaching.* Our final recommendation is for the program to develop a policy on the preparation of graduate students as course instructors of record. Several graduate students indicated that they were asked to teach courses before they felt adequately prepared to do so. The development of a student teaching policy would likely stimulate discussion about the role of students in offering the undergraduate curriculum and what kinds of preparatory activities can be made available to them. For example, the policy might include prerequisites for becoming an instructor of record such as at least two years in the graduate program, serving as a teaching assistant for a prior section of the course, taking a course in college teaching, taking a workshop from the university's Center for Teaching Excellence, etc. Furthermore, codifying the responsibilities of the student's supervisor (e.g., 4 in-class observations with feedback at least once per term) would likely improve the student's experience in the classroom.

## **LIST OF INTERVIEWEES**

### Faculty

- Dr. Claudia Dozier
- Dr. Stephen Fawcett
- Dr. Charles Greenwood
- Dr. Gregory Madden
- Dr. Keith Miller
- Dr. Edward Morris
- Dr. Pamela Neidert
- Dr. Michael Roberts
- Dr. Jan Sheldon
- Dr. James Sherman

### Administrators and Administrative Staff

- Dr. Barbara Romzek, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

### Graduate Students

- Charryse Fouquette
- Brian Greer
- Megan Hafen
- Blake Hansen
- Amy Harper
- Brooke Jones
- Sylvia Maack
- Matt Newquist
- Steven Payne
- Katey Schmidt
- Erica Severtson